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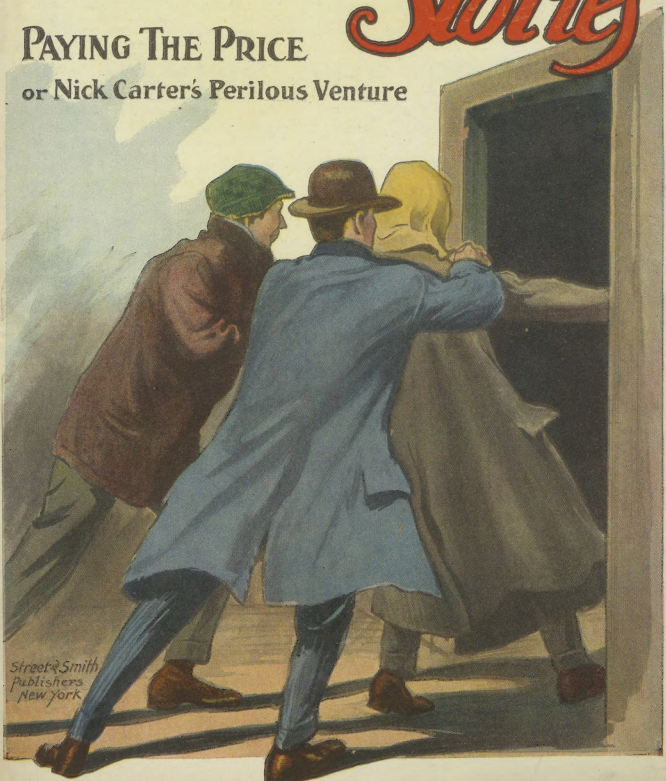
Nick Carter Stories

PAYING THE PRICE

or Nick Carter's Perilous Venture



NICK CARTER STORIES

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PAYING THE PRICE;

Or, NICK CARTER'S PERILOUS VENTURE.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

THE RECTORY MURDER.

Nick Carter paused only a moment before replying. He took that one moment to consider the other strange matter that had brought him to Washington, and whether compliance with the request just made by the chief of police would seriously interfere with it. He decided that it would not, and he then said quite gravely:

"Why, yes, I will go with Detective Fallon, since you both press me so earnestly. It is barely possible, chief, as you say, that I may detect something that would escape his notice. Who is the victim of the crime, if such it proves to be?"

"There is no question about that, Nick," said the chief. "The murdered man is the Reverend Father Cleary, of the St. Lawrence Church. He was found dead on the floor of his library in the rectory, which adjoins the church, about half an hour ago."

"A Roman Catholic priest, eh?"

"Yes."

"What do you know about it?"

"Very little. I was notified by telephone. I directed that nothing should be touched, nor anything said about the crime before I began an investigation. I sent two policemen to take charge in the rectory until I could get word to Detective Fallon. He is the best man on my force for such a job."

"But I am not in your class, Nick; far from it," put in Fallon, who was an erect, dark man of forty, with a rather grave and resolute type of face. "You are in a class of your own, Carter, as far as that goes."

"Cut it!" said the chief tersely. "Chucking violets is a waste of time. Fallon will tell you all that is known. Nick, while you are on the road. My car and chauffeur are outside. Take it, Fallon, and let me hear from you. You have carte blanche, Nick. Dig into the matter in your own peculiar way."

"I will see what I make of it," Nick replied, turning to accompany Fallon from the police headquarters.

It then was about half past eight on the first day of November, and the famous New York detective was in Washington on other business, the nature of which will presently appear. He knew it could wait, however, and he was not averse to complying with the urgent request of the local police chief, who, in as serious a case as had been reported to him, was more than eager to secure the aid and advice of the celebrated detective.

Nick took a seat with Fallon in the tonneau of the touring car, the latter having hurriedly given the chauffeur his instructions.

"We can run out there in ten minutes, Nick," he added, when the detective banged the door and sat down.

"The St. Lawrence Church, eh?" queried Nick, gazing at him. "I don't recall having seen it."

"It is a new one," said Fallon. "It was built only a year ago. It is pretty well out and not in a wealthy and fashionable section of the city. Father Cleary is a comparatively young priest, not over forty, and is known for the good work he has done in the slums. He will be sadly missed in the low districts."

"Were you acquainted with him?" Nick inquired.

"Yes, slightly."

"How long has he been in Washington?"

"About three years," said Fallon. "You were here about a month ago, by the way, on that government case against several foreign spies. I heard of it after you left. I was sorry not to have seen you."

"I was here only a couple of days with two of my assistants," Nick replied. "We were fortunate in speedily rounding up the miscreants, barring one."

"You refer to Andy Margate, I suppose."

"Yes. The net still is spread for him, however, and the

others now are doing time. Margate was not one of the spies. With the help of two local crooks, he turned a trick on the foreigners that proved to be much to my advantage."

"You refer to Larry Trent and Tom Carney?"

"Yes."

"Both are bad eggs," said Fallon. "I have known them from way back. Trent is the worse of the two, for he is better educated and came from decent people."

"So I have heard."

"He has a sister, Lottie Trent, who is an honest and industrious girl. She's employed as a stenographer in an office in the war department. I knew her parents, also, who have been dead for several years. By the way, Nick, there was mighty little published about the true inwardness of that foreign-spy case. They went up without a legal fight, even."

"There was no fight coming to them," said Nick dryly. "They had no defense. I clinched the case against them, including Captain Casper Dillon."

"But the bottom facts were nearly all suppressed."

"Yes, all of the bottom facts," Nick allowed, smiling significantly.

"It is hinted, nevertheless, that Senator Barclay and a young government engineer in the war department, one Harold Garland, were somewhat involved in the matter," said Fallon. "Is that true?"

"Really, Fallon, I cannot say," said Nick, still smiling.

Detective Fallon laughed lightly, knowing well enough that Nick could have informed him concerning every part of the case, if so inclined. He took no exceptions to his reticence, however, and inquired, after a moment:

"Is there any clew to Margate's whereabouts?"

"Not that I know of," Nick admitted. "The police throughout the country are on the watch for him. He is a very keen, crafty, and elusive fellow, however, and is better known in Europe, where he has done most of his knavish work. But we shall get him, Fallon, sooner or later. If——"

"Here we are," Fallon interrupted. "There is the church."

The touring car had turned a corner, bringing the sacred edifice into view. It occupied the corner beyond and stood somewhat back from the street, both front and side. In the rear, fronting on the side street, was the dwelling occupied by Father Cleary, whose only servant was an elderly housekeeper, one Honora Kane, who had been a widow many years.

The church, the rectory, and the surrounding grounds extended back to the next street, from which they were divided by a stone wall, the rear grounds being adorned with several old shade trees, the wide-spreading branches of which mingled with those in the side grounds of the adjoining estate.

Nick took in all these features of the scene while approaching the rectory, on the sidewalk in front of which a policeman was pacing to and fro. He touched his helmet when Fallon sprang from the car, but evidently he did not know the face of the more famous detective.

"What has been done, Bagley?" asked Fallon, pausing briefly.

"Nothing, sir, except to keep it quiet," said the policeman. "We have been waiting for you. Grady is inside."

"We'll go in," said Fallon.

"One moment," Nick interposed, detaining him. "The murder has not leaked out, Bagley, I take it?"

"No, sir."

"I see that there are no inquisitive people hanging around here. Have you seen any one, by the way, who appeared to have an interest in the place?"

"No, sir; I have not."

"That's all, Bagley; thank you."

"I see the point, Nick," Fallon remarked, as they entered the grounds fronting the rectory.

"Holy smoke!" Bagley muttered, starting after them. "That must be Nick Carter. Great guns! there'll be nothing to the case, if he is on it."

The two detectives were admitted to the hall by a pale young woman in a calico wrapper and a long gingham apron. Her tear-filled eyes, together with the low moans and sobs of a corpulent woman in an adjoining room, evinced the grief and distress of both.

"Let me take the ribbons, Fallon," Nick said quietly. "We may go over the traces if we drive too fast."

Fallon readily acquiesced, and Nick paused and questioned the woman who had admitted them.

He learned that her name was Margaret Dawson; that she was the nearest neighbor to the rectory, and that she had hurried to assist Mrs. Kane, the housekeeper, upon learning her cries when she discovered the terrible crime.

"Nora was nearly out of her bed, sir, and didn't know what to do," she explained. "So I telephoned to the police station, sir, and was told to let things alone till the officers came. That was not long, sir, and nothing has been touched, not even Father Cleary's body. An officer is in the library, sir, where it's lying."

"Mrs. Kane is the only servant?" questioned Nick, glancing at the sobbing woman in the adjoining room.

"Yes, sir. She is quite deaf, sir, and heard no disturbance during the night. She went to bed before nine o'clock last evening, leaving Father Cleary alone in the library."

"She has told you this?"

"Yes, sir. The library door was closed when she came down this morning to get breakfast, but she did not think of anything wrong on that account. When the meal was nearly ready, however, she went up to call Father Cleary and found his room had not been used. Then she came down to the library, sir, and discovered what had been done."

Seeing the housekeeper gazing anxiously at him, Nick entered the room and briefly questioned her. She could tell him only that Father Cleary had had no visitors early in the evening, and that he expected none, as far as she knew, and that he had not lately appeared at all troubled, or in any way apprehensive.

That was about all that the elderly housekeeper could tell him, and Nick turned to the waiting detective.

"She is too deaf to have heard any disturbance in the library, Fallon, after having gone to her bedroom," he said quietly, with a gesture directing the two women to remain in the front room.

"Yes, surely," Fallon agreed.

"Come. We will go into the library."

Nick led the way through the dim, simply furnished hall. He passed a passageway leading to a side door. Beyond it was the library, in the east side of the house, with a dining room nearly opposite across the hall, and a kitchen and porch in the rear.

The door of the library was then open. A policeman who had heard them enter had stepped into the hall and was waiting for them.

"One moment, Fallon," said Nick. "What has been done in this room, Grady, since the crime was discovered."

"Nothing, sir," said the policeman, gazing curiously at him. "Both women say they have not entered the room, though the housekeeper opened this door. I have disturbed nothing. Things are just as I found them."

"Very good."

Nick paused on the threshold of the open door and studied with searching scrutiny the tragic scene that met his gaze.

CHAPTER II.

CONFLICTING EVIDENCE.

The library was a square room of moderate size, comfortably, though simply furnished. An open desk stood against one of the walls, with a rise of shelves on each side, partly filled with books. In the middle of the room was a square, cloth-topped table, on which were several books and newspapers, also an oil lamp with a green porcelain shade.

A large leather-covered armchair stood near the table, between it and a swivel chair in front of the desk. A smaller chair near a window, the roller shade of which was partly drawn down, was overturned on the floor.

To the right of the window hung a portière consisting of two heavy tapestry curtains, suspended from a black walnut rod. They were drawn nearly together, but between them could be seen a double door with small, leaded glass windows. It opened upon a side veranda overlooking the three-shaded grounds east of and to the rear of the dwelling.

Nick noticed that one of the curtains was awry, and, glancing up, he saw that it had been torn from one of the pins that fastened it to the transverse rod above the door.

On the floor between this door and the table lay the body of the murdered priest. He was a man of middle size, wearing the conventional black garments of his calling. He was lying on his back, with his arms extended, his head nearly touching a leg of the table, and with his smooth-shaved face upturned in plain view of the detectives, a face on which the pallor and peace of death long since had fallen.

Father Cleary had been stabbed twice in the breast, nearly in a line with his heart, and his garments and the rug on which he was lying were saturated with blood, then dark and congealed.

Nick Carter saw at a glance that the priest had been dead for several hours.

"The scene is suggestive, Fallon; very suggestive," he said, after a few moments. "We will proceed deliberately, however, since nothing can be done for this man. It's a case of murder, pure and simple, if that can be. Let Grady wait in the hall. I will study the evidence in detail."

Fallon nodded and glanced significantly at the policeman.

Nick crossed the room and raised the window curtain. In the brighter light that entered, the scene was even more vividly tragic and gruesome.

"No weapon is here," said he, with searching gaze while he crouched to examine the corpse. The assassin took care not to leave it. It evidently was a dagger, or a knife with a broad blade. Note the two gashes in the garments. Either thrust would have been fatal. This man has been dead since last evening, probably as early as nine o'clock."

Nick had lifted one stiffened arm while speaking and dropped it to the floor.

"Surely," Fallon said simply.

"Here are stains of ink on his middle finger. He evidently was writing when——"

Nick did not finish the remark. He arose and turned to the open desk, then approached it. A sheet of paper was lying on it, also a pen that evidently had been abruptly dropped.

"Ah, here is proof of it," said Nick.

He bent forward and read from the sheet of paper merely the following lines:

"To the Right Reverend Bishop Cassidy, Washington, D. C.

"My Dear Bishop: I feel compelled to ask your consideration of a matter of which I have just become informed. Though the sacred secrecy of the confessional forbids——"

That was all, written with a firm and flowing hand, and Nick straightened up and turned to his companion.

"Yes, this settles it, Fallon," said he. "Father Cleary was writing when his assassin entered. Observe that he quickly dropped his pen, instead of placing it in this tray with the others."

"Yes, obviously," Fallon agreed.

"Plainly, then, he was startled, or even alarmed by some unexpected noise. That would not have been the case, Fallon, if his bell had rung, either that of the front or the side door."

"But he may not have been alone at that time," suggested Fallon. "The person by whom he was killed may have been here."

"That is not probable," Nick quickly objected. "This letter which he began to write denotes that he was alone, also that some person had just left him, or only a short time before, and by whom serious information of some kind had been imparted to him, so serious that he felt compelled to write about it to Bishop Cassidy."

"It must in that case have been something relating to the church."

"Not necessarily. I do not, in fact, think that it was."

"Why so?"

"Notice the next line: 'Though the sacred secrecy of the confessional forbids,'" Nick pointed out. "There he stopped and dropped his pen. Forbids what? We know that it forbids his revealing what is imparted in confession. That seems to have been the source of the information about which he intended to write, judging from the beginning of the letter. It may not, of course, have been part of a penitent's confession. It may have been something indirectly related with it, or referring to a confession."

"I see," Fallon nodded. "There seems to be no way to definitely determine."

"Not at present," Nick replied, folding the sheet of paper and putting it in his pocket. "Let's go a step farther."

Nick turned and took up the lamp on the table, shaking it gently and peering into the chimney.

"Empty," said he tersely. "The wick is turned up and charred. The lamp burned until the oil was exhausted.

The assassin did not extinguish the light. He left in a hurry, no doubt."

"He remained long enough to close the door leading into the hall," said Fallon. "The housekeeper found it closed this morning."

"Father Cleary may have closed it when he received his first visitor."

"You think there were two?"

"I do," said Nick.

"Here together?"

"No. One came after the other had departed."

"But why did he close the hall door after letting them out?" questioned Fallon, a bit doubtfully. "Mrs. Kane's statements imply that she usually found it open in the morning."

"I don't think that he let them out, not both of them at least," said Nick. "Here is another door."

"Ah, I see."

Nick pointed to the portière hanging across it.

"He may have let the first visitor out this way, instead of by the front or side door," said he. "This door leading into the hall, in that case, still would have been closed."

"I see the point."

"He may have admitted his second visitor through this curtained door, or perhaps have left it open a little for ventilation after letting out the other," Nick continued to reason. "It may have been violently forced from outside, on the other hand, alarming him while he was writing."

"I follow you," nodded Fallon.

"Notice that one side of the curtain is awry and torn from one of the pins supporting it. The location of the body, too, between the window and this table, shows that Father Cleary probably was approaching the window when he was assaulted and stabbed. There is no evidence of a struggle. His assailant evidently flung aside those curtains so violently that one was partly torn from its fastening, and he then sprang at the priest and stabbed him before he could defend himself."

"That certainly seems, Nick, to be a reasonable reconstruction of the murder itself," said Fallon, noting the points mentioned.

"Let's see what more we can find in support of it," said Nick.

He now approached the portière and examined it. On the edge of one of the curtains, where a hand evidently had grasped it, was a plainly discernible red stain, obviously a bloodstain.

Nick called Fallon's attention to it, then gazed at it with a puzzled expression on his earnest face.

"The miscreant's hand was soiled with blood after the stabbing," said Fallon. "He tore the curtain from the pin when leaving, instead of when he entered, as you were led to infer. What are you thinking about?" he added, noting Nick's look of perplexity.

Nick parted the curtains before replying. He then found that the door was set in a narrow casement, just wide enough to permit the two sections of the door to open inward.

Nick opened both and found on the woodwork of the right-hand section, or that to the right of a person standing on the veranda and looking into the room, four stains of blood, evidently from parts of the fingers of a man's hand that had grasped that section of the door. Though they were too smeared to be of value as finger prints, in so far as revealing the tissues of the skin was concerned, they showed plainly the size and shape of the fingers, which could only have been those of a man.

"By Jove, I don't quite fathom this," Nick remarked, after a moment.

"Fathom what, Nick?" questioned Fallon.

"These bloodstains."

"Why do they mystify you? I see nothing strange in them. The murderer evidently drew the portière and closed this door with a bloodstained hand."

"I am not so sure of it."

"How can you reason otherwise?"

"You overlook something," said Nick. "It may be a very important point."

"What is that? Explain."

"Notice that it was the man's right hand that grasped this section of the window," said Nick. "The relative size and position of the finger marks show that, also that he must have been facing toward the room, not coming out of it."

"By gracious, that's so!" said Fallon, gazing.

"That part of the portière which is stained and torn from the pin, moreover, is on the same side of the window."

"True."

"To have grasped them with his right hand, therefore, the man must have been backing out of the room, if leaving it."

"True again."

"There is one alternative," said Nick.

"Namely?"

"That instead of backing out of the room—he was entering it."

"But that is hardly tenable, Carter."

"Why?"

"Because his hand was stained with blood. He must have been leaving the room after the murder," Fallon argued.

"Unless——"

"Unless what?"

"Unless his hand was soiled with blood before he entered and killed the priest."

"But——"

"Stop a moment," Nick interrupted. "I now am convinced that this murder was committed in just the manner that I have described. Father Cleary heard some one back of the portière, or forcing the window, and he sprang up to see who was here. The intruder flung aside the portière and stabbed him."

"Well?"

"Notice this point," said Nick. "The murderer evidently did not remain to accomplish anything more. He did not go to the desk to see what the priest had been writing, or he would, if my previous reasoning is correct, have taken away the letter Father Cleary had begun."

"Surely," Fallon quickly allowed.

"We can safely assume, then, that the assassin got out as quickly as possible," Nick proceeded. "Surely, then, he would not have backed out. He would have hurried straight out, drawing the portière and closing the double door."

"Undoubtedly."

"The side of the curtain which is stained, also the same section of the door, would have been to his left, there-

fore, and naturally would have been grasped with his left hand."

"Certainly."

"That gives rise to a very pertinent question," said Nick. "Why was his left hand stained with blood?"

"You mean?"

"Most men wield a knife with the right hand," Nick went on. "That is the hand that should have been covered with blood from the knife used, not the left, which naturally would have been raised to seize his victim by the throat or shoulder to prevent resistance."

"By Jove, there's no getting around that, Nick, as far as it goes," Fallon thoughtfully admitted, more deeply impressed and now more mystified. "But these prints on the door show plainly enough that it was the right hand that was soiled."

"They also show that he must have been facing the room," said Nick. "In other words, Fallon, that he was backing out of it, which you admit is improbable—or that he was entering it with blood on his hand, which you also think is untenable."

Fallon shook his head and frowned.

"Hang it, Nick, you're mixing me all up," he declared. "I won't know in another minute whether I'm afoot or horseback. You tell me what you think. Never mind what I think. Your head is worth two of mine—yes, half a dozen."

"No, I think not," said Nick, smiling faintly. "Plainly, nevertheless, these bloodstains present inconsistencies not easily explained at this moment."

"They do so, for fair."

"We will look a little farther. You saw that I found this door unlocked?"

"Yes, I noticed that."

"It was secured only by the latch, which can be lifted from either side. It is safe to assume, since the lock is not damaged, that the assassin found the door unlocked. Either that, or, as I have said, it was opened a little for ventilation."

"The latter seems quite probable," said Fallon. "It was unseasonably warm last evening."

Nick stepped out on the veranda, instead of replying, Fallon following.

It extended from the side door, where two low steps led down to a gravel walk running out to the street. The veranda was about twelve feet in length, with a vine-covered trellis at the rear end of it, and with the outer side protected with a scroll railing.

Near the trellis stood a large willow armchair, in which Father Cleary had been accustomed to sit and read at times on warm, pleasant days.

Nick glanced in that direction and made another strange discovery.

CHAPTER III.

THE MYSTERIOUS BANDAGE.

The first thing to catch Nick Carter's eye after stepping out on the veranda was a strip of white cotton cloth, also a piece of common white string, both lying on the veranda floor near the willow chair mentioned.

The strip of cloth was somewhat soiled and wrinkled, also creased and curled in a way, and Nick picked it up and examined it.

He found that it was about two feet in length and five inches wide, also that it had been carefully folded lengthwise. On one soiled end of it were stains of blood.

"By Jove, here's another bit of curious evidence," said he, after a careful examination.

"It looks like a bandage," said Fallon.

"That's just what it is."

"But why curious?"

"Note the wrinkles and creases and the way it curls," said Nick. "Plainly enough, Fallon, it has been bound around a man's hand, or it would not have retained these several turns and creases."

"I see."

"Hold out your hands, both of them. We can find out by readjusting these quirks and turns on which hand it was worn."

"Certainly. That's a simple problem."

Nick proceeded to fit the bandage, so to speak, to Fallon's hands. It would not fit the right hand, though turned in either direction, without altering the original turns and wrinkles. It could be perfectly bound around the left hand, however, and the result of Nick's experiment was convincing.

"This is as plain as twice two," said he. "It was worn by some man on his left hand."

"Surely," Fallon agreed. "He probably had a sore hand, or a cut."

"You are wrong," said Nick. "That's the curious part of it."

"Wrong?" questioned Fallon, puzzled. "Why so?"

Nick still had the bandage twined around his companion's left hand.

"Notice these bloodstains," he replied. "They are not on the inside of the bandage, which would come next to a cut, or sore. They are on the outside of it."

"By Jove, that is a bit strange," Fallon now declared.

"The blood did not soak from a wound, moreover, for the layer of cloth beneath this outside one is perfectly clean, as you see."

"True."

"So, as you now can see, is the inside of the bandage, which came next to the hand," Nick continued, removing it and displaying the inner side. "There is not a sign of blood, pus, salve, or liniment, as if it had been bound around a wounded hand. It is perfectly clean, in fact."

"Humph!" Fallon ejaculated, gazing at it with increasing perplexity. "There is no question as to your being right. It speaks for itself. But what in thunder do you make of it?"

"The hand was not injured," said Nick.

"It may have been lame, or sprained."

"The bandage would not have been removed in that case, Fallon," Nick replied. "If sufficiently lame to require a bandage, it would not have been removed when the man arrived here. No man about to attempt a desperate job with a lame hand would first weaken the hand by removing a bandage with which it had been protected, or strengthened."

"That's true, also," Fallon nodded. "You think it was worn by the assassin?"

"I do."

"When he entered?"

"No. Before he entered," said Nick. "In order to have free use of his hand, he evidently tore off the bandage and string and threw them aside before he entered. Here are stains of blood on the string, also, proving that those

on the bandage were on the outside of it, as I have already demonstrated."

"You're right, Nick," agreed Fallon. "There is no denying it."

"Take it from me, too, the man's hand was not injured."

"But why that bandage, then?"

"For some other reason," Nick said dryly. "What that reason was, Fallon, remains to be learned. It would be a waste of time for us to try to guess it."

"I agree with you."

"The blood on the outside of the bandage evidently came from the man's right hand, moreover, which I already have pointed out was stained, not after, but before he entered this door. This mysterious bandage confirms my previous deductions."

"By Jove, it's a perplexing mess," said Fallon, brows knitted. "I cannot fathom why the scoundrel's right hand was soiled with blood before he entered this house. Why it afterward may have been is simple enough."

"Let's go a step farther," said Nick, thrusting the string and bandage into his pocket.

He then began a careful examination of the veranda floor, but he could find no tracks, nor evidence of any description.

Leaving the veranda, Nick then inspected the walk leading out to the street, also the neatly trimmed lawn adjoining it. The gravel walk retained no footprints, but Nick had taken only a few steps when, abruptly halting, he pointed to the greensward.

The grass was slightly bent and bruised. Faint though it was, the track of a small shoe was discernible, showing its size and the direction in which it was turned.

"I see," Fallon nodded, crouching with Nick to examine it. "Some one recently stepped here, not longer ago than last evening."

"That some one was a child, a girl, or a woman with a small foot," Nick replied. "It most likely was the last, a young woman."

"Why so?"

"Notice the prints of the heel, which sank a little into the sod. It was small and quite high. The deduction is a simple one. Only young women wear shoes with French heels. They are seldom found on girls, or on elderly women."

"By Jove, you overlook nothing, Nick."

"Not this, surely, for it stares me in the face," Nick replied. "Here's another. Notice that the first points nearly toward the street. This points toward the rear grounds. Plainly, then, the woman was going toward the street when she first stepped from the gravel walk, and she then turned in the opposite direction."

"That's plain, too," Fallon agreed. "But what do you make of it?"

Nick glanced back at the veranda for a moment.

"The woman came from the side door, or from that opening on the veranda," said he. "She walked as far as here, as if about to go to the street, then she turned toward the rear grounds. Take it from me, Fallon, she was Father Cleary's first visitor last evening. He let her out, probably through the door opening upon the veranda, and she started for the street. After hearing him close the door, however, and knowing he was not watching her, she turned in the other direction."

"By Jove, I think you are right."

"Come. We'll try to follow the tracks."

Nick traced them with no great difficulty. The trail led him for a short distance diagonally across the grounds toward the back street. Then it diverged abruptly in the direction of the low wall dividing the church property from an adjoining estate.

Gazing over the wall, Nick discovered other tracks in the next yard, where the grass was not as closely trimmed and was considerably trampled down. It was in the side yard of a wooden dwelling somewhat back from the street and about thirty feet from the wall.

Leaping over the low wall, Nick examined the sod and grass. He found numerous intermingled tracks and indentations, including that of a slender heel and others much broader and deeper. Passing his hand over the grass and glancing at the palm, he found it slightly stained with blood.

"Here we have it, Fallon," he said, rising and displaying his hand. "Here is the key to the mystery, or to a part of it."

"Good heavens!" Fallon exclaimed, gazing at it and then at the trampled grass. "There was a fight here."

"A very one-sided fight, Fallon, unless I am much mistaken," Nick replied.

"You mean?"

"It's as plain as twice two, Fallon, as far as it goes," said Nick, confidently. "Father Cleary had a woman visitor last evening. She confided something to him, or revealed it in a confession, about which he then sat down to write to Bishop Cassidy."

"As the unfinished letter indicates."

"Exactly. After leaving him and pretending to start for the street, the woman came this way and got over the wall into this yard. Here are her heel prints in the sod. Why she came here and where she intended going is an open question."

"Plainly."

"Be that as it may, she went no farther voluntarily," Nick continued. "She was intercepted by two men, at least; possibly three. I can find at least two different heel tracks in the sod. The depth of them, also the trampled condition of the grass, show plainly that there was a brief struggle. The woman was overcome, though not without bloodshed, as also appears on the grass."

"Considerable blood, too, Nick, judging from your hand."

"Enough to tell this part of the story," Nick replied. "Probably, too, here is where Father Cleary's assailant got the blood on his right hand, as well as on the outside of the bandage, before entering the rectory."

"Yes, surely."

"He tore off the bandage and cast it aside before undertaking the more desperate game," Nick added. "My opinion is, at present, that the scoundrel knew that the woman had revealed something to the priest, whom he then killed to prevent further exposure, while confederates who were with him got away with the woman. That is my theory. Whether it is correct, or not, remains to be discovered, as well as the identity of the knaves and the whereabouts or fate of the woman."

"I agree with you," said Fallon gravely. "That seems to be the most reasonable theory, if not the only one. What's next to be done. Can we trace these tracks any farther?"

"Not beyond the street, I fear, though I will try to do so," said Nick. "I will also question the people living

in this house. They may have heard some disturbance last evening. In the meantime, Fallon, you return to the rectory and notify the coroner and a physician."

"The coroner is a physician, Doctor Hadley."

"He will be sufficient, then, for the present," said Nick. "You had better talk with the chief, also, and tell him what I make of the case. I saw a telephone on a stand in the hall."

"I saw it, too."

"Go ahead, then. I will rejoin you there a little later."

Fallon readily acquiesced, turning and quickly retracing his steps to the rectory.

Nick glanced again at the trampled grass, then traced the several faint tracks as far as the sidewalk, where, as he had expected, the trail ended abruptly.

He then rang at the door of the house, in the side yard of which he had made his latest discoveries. The summons brought a middle-aged woman to the door, who stated in reply to his questions that no disturbance had been heard the previous evening, and that she knew nothing of what had transpired outside of the house.

Nick saw plainly that she was telling the truth, and he did not long detain her. Returning to the sidewalk, he noted that there were no dwellings opposite, only several vacant lots, none of which was inclosed with a fence.

"The rascals may have gone in that direction," he said to himself, after vainly searching the street for tracks of a carriage or a motor car. "They must, if they got away with the woman, have had a conveyance of some kind. They may have crossed those lots, however, to the next street."

Bent upon confirming this, if possible, Nick walked in that direction. He had only just entered the nearest of the several lots, however, when he saw some pieces of white paper scattered over the dry ground. They appeared to be fragments of a torn letter, and were so fresh and clean that they must have been recently dropped.

Nick picked up a few of the fragments and examined them. They were written on only one side, in a dainty, feminine hand; but the few words on each piece, none of which was more than an inch square, gave him only a vague idea as to the character of the entire letter.

That was so suggestive, however, that Nick carefully searched the ground for the remaining fragments, which had been somewhat scattered by the wind, or designedly done by the person who had destroyed the letter. He succeeded in finding enough of the fragments to feel reasonably sure that they would nearly complete the torn sheet, and he inclosed them in his notebook.

Nick then crossed the vacant lots to the next street, noting that the locality was one in which such a crime as he now suspected could have been committed without much danger of detection; but he could discover no further clew to the movements of the woman and her assailants, and then retraced his steps to the rectory.

The coroner had arrived during his absence and was viewing the remains of the murdered priest. Nick did not remain to talk with him, however, but beckoned for Fallon to join him on the veranda.

"I must be going, now, for I have an appointment this morning," he explained. "You can tell Doctor Hadley, also the chief, what I make of the case. Here is Father Cleary's unfinished letter, which you had better hand to the coroner. I will try to see you later and give you further assistance."

Detective Fallon thanked him, and Nick then departed.

CHAPTER IV.

A CONNECTING LINK.

Nick Carter had spent much less time at the St. Lawrence rectory than one might infer from the nature and extent of his investigations. He had covered the ground rapidly, despite the numerous deductions and explanations with which he had assisted Detective Fallon, from whom he parted shortly before ten o'clock.

Something like twenty minutes later, Nick alighted from a taxicab at a handsome stone residence in Massachusetts Avenue. It was that of Senator Ambrose Barclay, one of the leading statesmen then in the higher house, and the man directly responsible for Nick Carter's arrival in Washington late the previous night.

A butler admitted the detective and at once ushered him into a richly furnished library, where Nick was almost immediately joined by both Senator Barclay and his daughter Estella, a beautiful brunette in the twenties. The great service already done them by the detective was fresh in their minds, only a month having elapsed, and their greeting was extremely cordial.

"I got your wire saying you would see me this morning," Senator Barclay then said, while Stella quietly closed the door. "I'm very glad you could make it convenient to comply with my request. I have not forgotten how deeply I am indebted to you, Carter, for having saved my reputation in that foreign-spy affair. I will not say my honor, of course, for I was in no degree culpable, though malicious persons, or an uninformed public, might have thought differently."

"I was very well aware of it, Senator Barclay, and I made sure that your name did not appear in the matter," Nick replied. "But let the dead bury the dead. What's the trouble, now, that you again need my aid?"

"I am in a quandary, possibly in an equally bad mess," said the statesman. "It concerns, to begin with, the same young man who was robbed of the government coast-defense plans by those infernal foreigners, aided by that traitor, Dillon, all of whom woolly-eyed me into friendly relations with them for more than a year. I cringe with chagrin when I think of it."

"But how is Harold Garland involved in your present trouble?" questioned Nick, keeping him to the point.

"Involved in it!" blurted Senator Barclay. "Damn it—excuse me, Stella; I forgot you were here. How is Garland involved in my present trouble? Hang it, Carter, he is something more than involved in it. He is the trouble."

Nick laughed, while Stella Barclay blushed profusely.

"Suppose you explain, senator, without any expletives," Nick suggested.

"Yes, dad, dear, do," pleaded Stella. "Tell Mr. Carter the whole business. Don't mind me. I shall survive it."

"It can be told in a nutshell, Carter," said Senator Barclay familiarly. "Since you opened his eyes to the devilish treachery of that jade, Madame Irva Valaska, Garland has transferred his affection to my daughter. He always was fond of her, mind you, and he now declares that he loves her. I am glad that he does, and she him.

I am fond of Garland myself, as far as that goes, for he's a clean-cut, manly, and wonderfully capable fellow. I know of no man whom I would rather have for a son-in-law."

"Permit me to extend my best wishes," said Nick, with a sort of droll pleasantry, glancing at the crimson face of the smiling girl. "I think, like your father, that Harold Garland is a remarkably fine fellow."

"I think so, too, Mr. Carter," Stella said simply.

"But what is the trouble?" Nick inquired, turning again to her father. "What is wrong with Garland?"

"That is what I want you to learn," Senator Barclay said gravely. "Garland is not himself. He is frightfully worried about something."

"You don't know about what?"

"No; I only suspect. Although he firmly denies it, Nick, he is in serious trouble of some kind. It is something that came up about a week ago, when Stella and I first noticed his changed manner and appearance."

"Changed in what way?" Nick inquired.

"He has become indescribably moody and depressed. I have watched him covertly at times and seen him wearing an expression of utterly indescribable anxiety. He has lost twenty pounds in a week and looks as pale as a corpse. Something must be done, Carter, and you are the man who must do it."

"We are dreadfully anxious," put in Stella, with an appealing glance at the detective. "Do, Mr. Carter, see what you can learn about him, or from him."

"You have questioned him, of course," said Nick.

"Yes, vainly."

"Does he say nothing at all in explanation of these changes?"

"He attributes them to our imagination and insists that there is nothing wrong," said Senator Barclay. "I know better, however, and that he is all wrong. I called him down quite severely night before last, Mr. Carter, and he then made the remark which afterward led me to send for you."

"What was that?"

"I charged him with being in serious trouble of some kind and insisted that he must confide in me," Senator Barclay explained. "My persistency irritated him a little. He seemed to lose his head for a moment, and he asserted quite resentfully that I must cease interrogating him. He then added impulsively that I would be quite lucky if I kept out of the trouble myself."

"H'm, is that so?" said Nick. "Did you ask him to explain?"

"Yes, certainly. He declared that he meant nothing definite, however, that he had spoken impulsively and only in a cursory way. I am sure, nevertheless, that the remark had much more serious significance, and that he implied that I might become involved in the very trouble with which he was burdened."

"That is a natural inference," Nick agreed.

"And you know, too, what it might signify," Senator Barclay responded gravely. "There is only one bad mess, Mr. Carter, in which I could be involved with Garland. That is something relating to the theft of those government plans, and the fact that my name was kept out of that unfortunate affair."

"That is what I have in mind," bowed Nick.

"You also know, of course, that the miscreant who stole them from Dillon after he had received them from Irma Valaska, is still at large. I refer to Andy Margate. He is capable of any kind of knavery. If he——"

"I know all about Andy Margate and of what he is capable," Nick interposed. "It may be, of course, that he still is in Washington. He may be attempting to blackmail Garland."

"That is precisely what I fear."

"I inferred so. Have you said as much to Garland?"

"I have. He declares that he has not seen Margate, however, and that he knows nothing about him. If he is lying, if my suspicions are correct—well, you know, Carter, what that would mean for me. My reputation would again be in jeopardy. My honor, my seat in the senate, my political career—all would be frightfully threatened."

"I agree with you," said Nick seriously. "I will look into the matter, Senator Barclay, and sift it to the bottom."

"That is precisely what I want."

"There is, I infer, nothing more definite that you can tell me."

"No, nothing."

"When did you last see Garland?"

"Night before last."

"Does he know that you have sent for me?"

"He does not. He might resent it."

"Possibly," Nick allowed. "Is he still living at the Grayling?"

"Yes."

"Does he occupy the same office in the war department?"

"He does."

"Very good. I will leave immediately, then, and try to see him during the day," said Nick, rising to go. "I will either call here again this evening, or telephone to you and let you know what I have learned. I think, as you do, that the matter may be serious."

"You will go right at it?" Barclay anxiously questioned.

"Like a bull at a gate," Nick assured him. "You will hear from me this evening."

Nick did not, nevertheless, immediately start in search of Harold Garland. He returned to the Willard, where he was registered under an assumed name, and went up to his apartments. He was thinking of the shocking murder brought to his notice that morning, of the dead priest, of the unknown woman, or girl, who by that time perhaps had suffered a like terrible fate.

Hoping to give Detective Fallon further assistance, and suspecting that the torn letter he had found might have a bearing upon the double crime, Nick set to work matching the edges of the numerous fragments of the letter, placing them together, and pasting them on a sheet of blank paper.

It took him half an hour to complete the work. He found that several fragments from the bottom of the letter were missing, presumably having been blown away from the vacant lot where he had found the others, or dropped elsewhere by the recipient of the letter. It was decidedly suggestive, in view of the double crime and the surrounding circumstances. It was written with a pen, evidently by a woman, and read as follows:

"DEAR HARRY: You must meet me this evening, Tuesday, at the time and place I mentioned. Do not disappoint me. There is no question as to the conditions of

which I informed you, and immediate steps to meet the situation are absolutely imperative. Meet me this evening, therefore, without fail. I will not take 'no' for an answer. Unless you comply, I shall do what I have threatened. I will take steps to compel you to rectify the terrible——"

The remainder of the letter was missing, several fragments from the bottom of the torn sheet. They evidently had contained, however, only a few concluding words and the signature of the writer.

Nick read it, then reread it, with brows knitting, and a more serious expression on his thoughtful face.

"Tuesday evening," he muttered. "That must have been last evening. The scraps of paper would have blown away, or have become soiled, if dropped on the ground a week ago. The appointment was for last evening, surely, and the significance of the letter—by Jove, it might be!"

Nick's train of thought abruptly digressed.

"He frequently is called Harry. He was not at the Barclay residence last evening, not since night before last. Can this be what is troubling him? Is he in some way involved with another woman? Was Harold Garland the recipient of this letter? Have I blundered egregiously in my estimate of his character? Is he a wolf under the surface? Now aiming to wed Stella Barclay, has he found it necessary to rid himself of a woman and kill a priest, in order to preclude an exposure of previous vices? I don't believe it, by Jove, but I'll mighty soon find out."

Nick arose abruptly, folding the pasted letter and putting it into his pocket. He then selected a simple disguise from among several in his suit case, one of which he felt sure was adequate to serve his purpose. He adjusted it carefully at his mirror, and then left the hotel and headed straight for Harold Garland's office in the War Department Building.

CHAPTER V.

IN THE TOILS.

It was noon when Nick Carter entered the vast building on Pennsylvania Avenue, in which the state, war, and navy departments of the nation are located.

Nick proceeded at once to the west wing and the office he was seeking, which he entered without the ceremony of knocking. He found a young woman at work with a typewriter.

"Is Mr. Garland inside?" Nick inquired, glancing at the closed door of a private office.

"No, sir," said the stenographer, turning from her table. "But he is likely to come in at any moment."

"Where has he gone?"

"To an office on the next floor, sir. A young lady is mysteriously missing, one with whom he is acquainted, and he wanted to inquire about her."

"Is she employed in the office to which he has gone?"

"Yes, sir."

"How long has she been missing?"

"She was at work yesterday, sir, and left at the usual hour. She has not been seen since, according to Mr. Barstow, in whose office she is employed. She was on some very important work and should have been here this morning, which led to an immediate investigation. She lately has been acting strangely, which also has caused some misgivings."

"How strangely?" questioned Nick.

"Well, as if she was worried or in trouble of some kind, as near as I could learn from one of Mr. Barstow's clerks, who came here a short time ago to inform Mr. Garland."

"You said that Garland is acquainted with her?"

"I think so."

"Are you?"

"I know her only by sight and name."

"What is her name?"

"Charlotte Trent," said the girl. "She is more commonly called Lottie Trent."

Nick Carter evinced no surprise upon hearing the name of the missing girl. It told him, nevertheless, in view of all of the circumstances, that the case was rapidly becoming more serious and complicated. He knew, recalling what Fallon had said that morning, that this same Lottie Trent must be the sister of Larry Trent, the crook confederate of Andy Margate in the recent theft of the government plans, a fact that at once increased the detective's misgivings.

Nick did not then stop to consider the matter, however, nor to further question the stenographer. He saw that she could tell him nothing more definite. Without evincing any special interest in what he had heard, he now said to her:

"I wish to see Mr. Garland on very important business. Ask him to wait for me if he comes in presently. I will return in a few minutes."

"I will, sir," replied the girl. "I think you then will find him here."

Nick thanked her and withdrew to the corridor, where he found an attendant who directed him to Barstow's office on the floor above. While he was approaching the stairway to walk up, Nick saw Garland leaving the elevator, just returning to his own office.

He looked gaunt and white, a shadow of his former self, as Senator Barclay had stated. His refined, clean-cut face, which was as strong in many respects as that of the detective, wore an expression of overwhelming anxiety. His eyes had an abnormal glitter, as if the fever of prolonged mental distress was consuming him.

Nick watched him for a moment, then went up to Barstow's office. There, after partly confiding in the government official, whom he pledged to subsequent secrecy, Nick obtained a specimen of Lottie Trent's handwriting. He also learned that Garland had been sent for only because he recently had been seen talking with the girl in the corridors, which had given rise to a hope that he might know what now occasioned her absence. He had asserted, nevertheless, that he knew nothing about her.

Nick returned to the corridor and compared the girl's writing with that in the torn letter found near the scene of the murder. A mere glance at both, for Nick was a keen chirographist, convinced him that Lottie Trent was the writer. He replaced the letter in his pocket and returned to Garland's office.

"He came in soon after you went out," remarked the stenographer, looking up and smiling. "You will find him in his private office."

Nick entered it without knocking.

Garland was seated at a large roll-top desk. He swung round in his swivel chair and sharply eyed the detective.

"Oh, you're the gentleman who called while I was out," he said, a bit brusquely. "Sit down. What can I do for

you? My clerk said you spoke of having important business."

"It is very important," Nick replied, drawing up a chair.

"Concerning what? I don't recall having met you."

"My name is Parsons," said Nick, turning the lapel of his vest and displaying the edge of his detective badge. "I am in the bureau of secret investigation."

"A detective?"

"Yes, in other words."

"But why have you called on me? What's your business?" Garland demanded, with sharper scrutiny.

"This may give you a hint at it," said Nick, unfolding the pasted letter and handing it to him.

Garland took it and viewed it curiously for a moment. He then read it without speaking, but with brows knitting closer over his feverish eyes. Looking up with a perplexity not easily to have been distrusted, he asked, a bit curtly:

"Why is it pasted together in this way? It gives me no hint at your business. What's the meaning of it?"

"You don't know?" questioned Nick, though already convinced of it.

"Certainly not. It's Greek to me."

"Have you never seen it before?"

"No, never."

"Do you recognize the writing?"

"I do not. I haven't the slightest idea who wrote it. Why is the signature missing?"

"Because I could not find the fragment containing it where I found the others," said Nick. "I happen to know, however, who wrote the letter."

"Who?"

"A girl named Lottie Trent."

"Lottie Trent—oh, by thunder!" Garland's frown vanished as quick as a flash. "By Jove this may help to clear up a mystery, Mr. Parsons. Lottie Trent is missing and cannot be found. I have just talked with her employer. He—"

"So have I," Nick interrupted. "He told me that you have frequently been seen talking with the girl. Talking with her so earnestly that—"

"Stop!" Garland's teeth met with a quick snap. "And that led you to suspect that this letter was sent to me. I see, now, why you covertly approached the matter. You aimed to evoke some sign of self-betrayal on my part. Understand one thing, Mr. Parsons, right here and now," he added, with threatening vehemence. "I know nothing about this letter nor about Lottie Trent."

"You did not see her, then, last evening," said Nick, unruffled.

"No, sir; I did not."

"Nor attempt to meet her?"

"Certainly not," snapped Garland. "Why would I attempt to meet her? I would not have known where to find her. The girl is nothing to me."

"I also happen to know, Mr. Garland, where she was about half past eight last evening," Nick replied. "Unless I am very much mistaken, she was forcibly abducted by two or three men. That was accomplished just before the murder of the priest."

"Murder? Priest?" gasped Garland, staring. "What are you talking about? What do you mean?"

"I think, too, that it must have been before you, Mr. Garland, arrived in the grounds back of the St. Lawrence Church and rectory. Otherwise, you might have prevented the abduction of Lottie Trent and the murder of Father Cleary. If you had arrived earlier—"

"Stop a moment!"

Garland lurched forward in his chair. He now was more than pale. The last vestige of color had vanished from his cheeks, leaving him ghastly and drawn, with lips as gray as ashes.

"See here!" he cried, half in his throat. "At what are you driving? What do you mean by the murder of a priest and the abduction of this girl? Have you come here, Mr. Parsons, bent upon leading me into a net? Are you one of those infernal, double-dealing detectives who seeks to stab a suspect from behind, instead of attacking him openly? Why do you say I was in the grounds of the St. Lawrence Church last evening? Why—"

"Only because you were there," Nick interrupted. "I can read it in your eyes, in your colorless face. This patched letter alone would convince me that you were there. What was the occasion? Why did you go there? A denial will not avail you anything. Shape the opposite course, Mr. Garland, and confide in me. It would be to your advantage, as it already has been. I am not half a stranger to you—as you can see."

Nick whipped off his disguise with the last, but the immediate effect upon his hearer was not what he expected. For a half-smothered cry of alarm broke from Garland, instead of the cordial greeting the detective anticipated, and the young man leaped up and darted to the door, at which he listened intently for several seconds, as pale and trembling as if a sheriff with a death warrant awaited him in the outer office.

Nick was compelled to admit to himself that he was somewhat puzzled. He waited without speaking, nevertheless, until Garland turned back and resumed his seat.

"I overlooked for a moment that you came in disguise," he said nervously, while he seized and warmly pressed both hands of the detective. "Heavens, what a calldown I gave you. But it goes without saying, Nick, and very well you know it, that I fairly worship you and am overjoyed at seeing you."

Nick smiled oddly and shook his head.

"That remains to be seen, Garland," he replied.

"What do you mean?"

"I might believe it under different circumstances."

"Different circumstances? How different?"

"You were not glad when you first recognized me. You were seriously alarmed. You were glad only when you remembered that I entered this office in disguise. You feared at first that some one had seen and recognized me. Your looks and conduct admit of no other interpretation. Come, come, what's the meaning of it? What's the answer?"

Garland hesitated, settling back in his chair, looking white and worried again, as if burdened with fears he could not overcome.

"Really, Nick, there is no answer—"

"Stop a bit," Nick interrupted. "Don't hand me anything of that kind. I can read deeper than most men. You cannot get by me, Garland, with any flimsy denials. You are living in abject fear of some one. You fear that you are being secretly watched, and that this office is also under stealthy espionage. You fear that I was seen and recognized when I entered.

"There can be only one reason for such a fear as

that. Crooks are putting something over on you, Garland, and you have been warned against appealing to me for aid. You feel that you are absolutely in their power, too, or you would have ignored their warning and their threats. No other deductions are tenable. They would not have feet to stand on."

"Good heavens!" Garland huskily exclaimed, nervous and trembling. "You don't know what you are saying, Nick, nor——"

"Oh, yes, I do," Nick again interrupted. "Nor have I finished, Garland, by any means. You listen to me for half a minute."

"But——"

"There aren't any buts," Nick insisted impressively. "You hold your horses and hear what I have to say. Father Cleary, of the St. Lawrence Church, was murdered last evening. He was stabbed to death in the rectory. Lottie Trent, after having seen him and confided something to him, was abducted by the knaves who afterward killed him. Both crimes were committed to prevent further exposure of what the girl had told him. You, Garland, know what it was!"

"On my word, Carter, I——"

"Wait!" Nick cut in again. "I have adequate proof of all this. I am on the case and I'm going to sift it to the bottom. You, Garland, were near the scene of these two crimes. This torn letter written by Lottie Trent convinces me of that. I now can guess, too, with what object it was left there, and with what designs you were lured there. This girl is a sister of Larry Trent, now in prison for complicity with Andy Margate in the recent theft of your government plans. Now, Garland, you tell me the truth. I'll stand for nothing else, nor can anything else save you. I once have pulled you out of the fire. I can, if necessary, do it again. There is no middle course for you. I must arrest you, or know the whole truth. Out with it. What is Andy Margate putting over on you?"

There was no resisting Nick Carter under such conditions, and Garland now seemed to realize it. A look of relief had appeared on his pale face, that relief with which one burdened with a terrible secret sees the way open to confiding in another.

"You are right, Nick," he admitted, with sudden determination. "I am in just such a position as you suspect. I did fear that you had been seen coming here. Now that you are here, however, and can leave in disguise, as you entered, I will take a chance and tell you the whole business. I have, in fact, been tempted to send for you in spite of threats and warnings. Heavens, how I have longed for your aid and advice."

"You now may have both," said Nick. "Get right at it, then, and tell me the whole truth. You look like a nervous wreck."

"I am," Garland admitted. "I have suffered the tortures of hell for more than a week."

"Omit nothing. Tell me the whole business."

"It can be briefly told," Garland began. "I was called up by telephone nine days ago by an unknown man. He stated that I was about to receive a package by mail, and that the sender of it insisted upon having a personal interview with me. I was warned against confiding in any one, and threatened with direful consequences if I did so. I was told that an automobile would arrive at the first corner east of the Grayling, where I am living, at precisely nine o'clock that evening, and I must be there to immediately enter it, when I would be taken to the sender of the mailed package. I was repeatedly warned, mind you——"

"I understand," Nick interposed. "Never mind the warnings. Let's get at the facts. What followed?"

"I waited with indescribable misgivings, Nick, for the package said to have been sent to me," Garland continued. "It came an hour later. I opened it and found—a photograph of the portfolio that contained the government plans of which I was robbed by Irma Valaska and Captain Casper Dillon, whose infamous designs you so successfully foiled."

"H'm, is that so?" said Nick, with brows drooping. "A photograph of the portfolio, eh?"

"Yes."

"Is there any doubt about it?"

"Not the slightest. It shows the flap of the portfolio, turned back so as to show my name and address, which I had written on the inner side of it. The writing is plainly discernible and it corresponds precisely with that in the portfolio now in my possession."

"Where is the photograph?"

"Here in my safe, also the portfolio. I will get them. You may see for yourself."

"Wait one moment," Nick interposed. "I will examine them a little later. Go on with your story. What did you do after receiving the photograph?"

"What could I do?" questioned Garland nervously. "My misgivings were redoubled, and since have been confirmed. I did not dare to deviate from the directions given me. I confided in no one. I locked the photograph in my safe and determined to learn what was back of such an ominous beginning."

"Very good," Nick nodded. "With what result?"

"I followed the instructions given me," Garland proceeded. "I was on the corner mentioned at precisely nine o'clock that evening. A limousine approached. I saw plainly that the chauffeur was prepared to speed on, if in any way threatened."

"You entered it?"

"Yes." He hardly stopped for me to do so. A masked man was seated in it. He at once assured me that I was in no personal danger, and he then insisted upon blindfolding me. I consented reluctantly and he drew a black cap over my head. I then could see nothing, absolutely nothing, and I have no idea where I was taken."

"Where did you bring up?" Nick inquired.

"In a house or building into which I was led, still blindfolded," said Garland. "I do not know where it is located. I haven't the slightest idea. I heard the closing of a heavy door after entering, and I presently felt the downward movement of an elevator. I found myself in a lighted room a moment later, and the cap was removed from my head."

"And then?"

"Two masked men stood beside me. A third was seated at a table. In one corner stood a large photographic camera. The man at the table was not masked. It was, as you probably infer, Andy Margate."

"Yes, no doubt," Nick said dryly. "Well, what followed? What did Margate want of you?"

"That may be told in a nutshell."

"Briefly stated, then?"

"Margate has photograph copies of all of the govern-

ment plans stolen from me a month ago. They were taken during the short time he had the plans in his possession."

"Ah, I see!" said Nick. "That is, indeed, a serious matter. What does Margate intend doing with them?"

"He threatens to sell them to foreign powers," replied Garland, shuddering. "Think what that would mean! Thank God, however, he offered me one alternative."

"Ah!" Nick again exclaimed a bit dryly. "What is the alternative?"

"The privilege of buying them myself."

"Humph! Have you consented to do so?"

"What else could I do?" Garland demanded. "My position is worse than it was a month ago. If photograph copies of the government plans are possessed by this scoundrel, they are even more dangerous than the originals, which could be entirely changed if known to be hopelessly lost. In view of uncertainty concerning photograph copies, however, construction work in accord with the plans might be adhered to with disastrous consequences. You know what might follow if——"

"If war were declared, and our foes had photographic plans of our coast defenses—yes, I know all about that," Nick interrupted. "But that's in the dim and distant future. Let's stick to the game that now is being played. Did you consent to buy the photographs?"

"Yes."

"For what price?"

"One hundred thousand dollars was demanded," Garland said, with a groan. "I protested that it was more than I could possibly raise. Margate had learned, however, that I had a fortune of about sixty thousand dollars. He agreed to compromise at eighty thousand, and I was allowed ten days in which to raise the needed twenty. The infernal knave will not only leave me penniless, but also plunge me deep in debt."

"Have you raised the money?"

"All but five thousand, for which I think I can make arrangements to-morrow."

"To-morrow," Nick echoed. "That is your last day of grace, is it not?"

"Yes. I am to see Margate again to-morrow night."

"Where?"

"Under the same conditions as before."

"And he expects you to hand him the money?"

"He does. He insisted, in fact, that he would allow me only this one meeting; that he would, if the price is not paid to-morrow, at once take steps to sell the photographs abroad. He warned me that I would be constantly watched, and threatened to instantly end all negotiations with me if I confided in any one, or appealed for aid to the police. He mentioned you in particular, and threatened——"

"Never mind what he threatened," Nick interrupted, with an ominous frown. "He shall have good cause to threaten me."

"But consider my position, Nick," Garland cried hopelessly. "I am placed——"

"I see just where you are placed," Nick cut in again. "You have made the whole knavish business sufficiently plain. But I, Garland, now propose to take a hand in it."

"You mean——"

"I mean that the price shall be paid—but Andy Margate is the man who shall pay it," Nick forcibly declared. "I'll bring that rat up with a round turn, Garland, or I'll chuck my vocation."

"But how——"

"Don't ask me how," Nick interrupted. "Let me see your portfolio and the photograph you received by mail."

Garland hastened to get them from his safe.

Nick examined them carefully, inspecting the photograph with a powerful convex lens, particularly the address mentioned. He saw plainly that the photograph was a genuine one, that the writing could not otherwise have been so perfectly imitated, and he then returned them to his waiting companion.

"Lock them up again," he directed. "Now, Garland, answer me a few questions. Why have you recently been talking with Lottie Trent?"

"For only one reason, Nick. She has repeatedly stopped me in the corridors, or on the stairs, to beg me to use my influence to have her brother pardoned and liberated from prison. I have told her it would be useless, but she still persisted. She is a good girl, mind you, honest and industrious, with none of her brother's characteristics."

"There was no other occasion for your interviews with her?"

"Absolutely none."

"Did you go to the St. Lawrence Church last evening, or somewhere in that locality?"

"I did," Garland admitted.

"For what?"

"I was called up by telephone at the Grayling about nine o'clock. I recognized the voice of the same man who had talked with me about the photograph sent by mail. He said that he must see me, and directed me to meet him back of the St. Lawrence Church. I went there and waited until midnight, but he did not join me. I inferred that I had arrived too late."

"Have you since heard from him?"

"Yes, this morning. He telephoned that he was prevented from meeting me, and that I must keep the appointment made for to-morrow night."

"That will be kept, all right," Nick said a bit dryly. "Can you get a New York wire with this telephone?" he added, glancing at the instrument on Garland's desk.

"Yes, of course."

"Do so. I want my business office. I will have Chick and Patsy join me here to-morrow," said Nick, referring to his two most reliable assistants. "We'll show Andy Margate what wood shingles are made of, take my word for it."

Garland hastened to obey, and Nick soon was in communication with Chick Carter, to whom he gave such instructions as served his purpose, the nature of which will presently appear.

"Now, Garland, you must leave this matter to me and follow my instructions to the letter," said he, after talking with Chick. "There must be no change from your recent conduct and appearance. I do not want our meeting suspected, in case you are being watched, and you must govern yourself accordingly."

"I will do so," Garland assured him. "Heaven knows, in fact, I see no way out of this scrape."

"I'll find the way," Nick replied. "Let me have the key to your apartments in the Grayling."

"Certainly," Garland consented, with a look of surprise. "But what do you intend——"

"Never mind what I intend doing," Nick interrupted,

carefully replacing his disguise. "At what time do you usually arrive at your apartments?"

"After business hours?"

"Yes."

"About five o'clock."

"Very good," said Nick, rising to go. "You will not need the key, Garland. I will be there to admit you."

CHAPTER VI.

HOW NICK SIZED UP THE CASE.

Ten o'clock the following morning found three persons seated in Harold Garland's apartments in the Grayling—Nick Carter and his two assistants, Chick Carter and Patsy Garvan.

The murder of Father Cleary then was on every tongue. Newspapers throughout the country were describing the shocking crime under glaring headlines. It had leaked out, too, though Nick had not revealed it, that Lottie Trent had been abducted by the assassins and was in some way concerned in the crime.

The thousand tongues of rumor were never more busy. Conjectures of every description were in the air. Linked with the name of the missing girl, in circles where he was well known and his recent changed appearance had been noticed, was that of Harold Garland, and many already were whispering suspicions that he knew more than he was willing to tell.

These insinuations were given additional impulse by the fact that several newspapers were describing a man who had been noticed near the scene of the double crime, and whose actions, as reported by several observers, were of a kind to warrant suspicion. His identity had not yet been discovered by the newspapers, however, and thus matters stood at ten o'clock that morning on the second day following the murder.

"By Jove, it's a bad mess, an awfully bad mess," Chick Carter gravely remarked, after Nick had described the case in detail to both of his assistants.

Both had arrived in disguise at the Grayling that morning, in accord with instructions Nick had telephoned, and they had been given apartments on the same floor with those of Garland.

"Bad enough, Chick, but not nearly as bad as it might be," Nick replied. "I have stated only the superficial facts, not what I have detected under the surface."

"The case has redeeming features, then?"

"Decidedly."

"How so?"

"I suspect, to begin with, that Margate's scheme at the outset was only a colossal bluff. I don't believe he had, nor has, photograph copies of the government plans."

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Patsy, gazing. "He must have a nerve, chief, in that case."

"The proof of a pudding is its eating," Nick replied. "Whether it's a big bluff, or not, the rascal was in a fair way to get by with it. He has brought Garland to the point of planking down the money demanded."

"You think it a case of blackmail, then," said Chick.

"I do."

"But the photograph of the portfolio—he certainly must have taken that," Chick argued.

"Very true," Nick admitted. "It is a small photograph, however, and may have been taken with an ordinary kodak. Margate may have had a camera of that kind. He is a keen, far-sighted fellow. He may have apprehended that his designs at that time might miscarry, and that he later could work out the scheme I now suspect. Having that in view, he may have taken a photograph of the portfolio. A photograph of a big government plan with such a camera, however, would be of no earthly use."

"That's very true," Chick admitted.

"Bear in mind, now, that Margate had the plans considerably less than twenty-four hours after stealing them from Dillon," Nick continued. "It's not reasonable to suppose that he would immediately have thought of having them photographed, nor be supplied with the necessary paraphernalia."

"True again, Nick, as far as that goes."

"We can safely assume, too, that he would not have dared to employ a photographer to make the negatives. The nature of the plans would have forbidden that. It's a hundred to one, too, as I have said, that he was not provided with a camera large enough to have been of any use in making photographs of the plans, though he might have taken that of the portfolio."

"Gee! that's right, too, chief," put in Patsy, who had been listening attentively. "It was not in the crib where we recovered the plans, or we should have seen it. Chick and I searched the shack from cellar to attic. Besides, they must have been photographed by daylight, and Margate had the plans only one morning, when you come right down to it. We nailed the whole gang, you remember, soon after noon."

"Those are the very points, Patsy, on which I base my suspicions," Nick replied. "In so serious a matter as this, however, we must not bank on suspicions only. Aside from getting the photographs, if Margate really has them, we must put that thoroughbred rascal where he belongs."

"Didn't Garland see the photographs during his interview with Margate?" Chick questioned.

"He saw a batch of photographs and blue prints on a table, but was so unnerved by the threatening situation that he did not examine them, taking it for granted that they were what Margate stated."

"The more fool he," Chick said dryly.

"I suspect that the rascal would not have let him examine them, in case my suspicions are correct," said Nick. "I suspect, too, that the big camera Garland saw in the room was brought there only to give color to Margate's assertions."

"By gracious, chief, if we could find out where he got it——"

"That's the very point, Patsy," Nick interrupted. "He may have bought it in some store, or hired it from some photographer. You must start out this morning and follow up that thread."

"I've got you."

"You may be able to learn from whom the camera was obtained and where it was delivered. Garland has stated that it was too large for one to have carried away by hand. It may have been sent by express, or taken away in an automobile by the rascal himself. Follow up the thread, if possible, wherever it leads."

"Trust me for that, chief," said Patsy expressively.

"In the meantime, Chick, you must see Lottie Trent's brother, in prison, and find out from him whether the girl is acquainted with Margate, and, if possible, where he has been living since he slipped through our fingers a month ago. If you tell Larry Trent what has befallen

his sister and of what Margate is guilty. I think he will state all he knows about the rascal."

"Very likely," Chick agreed. "You have no doubt, I infer, that Margate is the man who killed the priest."

"Not the slightest," said Nick confidently.

"But for what reason?"

"Because, unless I am much mistaken, Lottie Trent has been friendly with Margate for some little time, not knowing his true name and character, nor anything about his relations with her convict brother," Nick explained. "I think she in some way discovered, however, that Margate was plotting with confederates against Garland, and that she went to Father Cleary and confided in him."

"Confided what?"

"One fact on which hinges the whole business and which further confirms my suspicions."

"Namely?"

"The fact that Margate is out only to blackmail Garland, and that he has not a single photograph of the government plans."

"But why didn't she inform Garland himself, in that case, instead of confiding in the priest?"

"She may have had no opportunity," Nick pointed out. "She may have made the discovery that very evening. She may have been threatened by Margate and others engaged in the scheme."

"I see," Chick nodded.

"She could frame up a plausible reason to visit the priest, perhaps, and take a chance that she could save Garland by doing so," Nick went on. "This is consistent with her recent appeals to him, and she would have been eager to do him such a service. She went out to expose the whole business to Father Cleary, I think, and was probably seen and followed by Margate and his confederates. They afterward killed the priest and got away with the girl, that nothing should prevent their getting the money expected from Garland."

"But how do you account for the letter written by the girl?"

"She was lured into writing it."

"When?"

"That very evening, Chick, after Margate learned that she was wise to his game," Nick continued to explain. "She probably did not know that he had discovered the fact and suspected that she might expose him."

"I see."

"He paved the way to further incriminate Garland, therefore, bent upon making a sure thing of bleeding him out of this money. He wrapped his hand with a bandage, pretending that he had sprained it, and got the girl to write the letter, she supposing it was for him."

"That's quite obvious, of course."

"Lottie Trent probably consented, not thinking of Garland's given name, in which the letter was addressed, nor of the covert significance of the letter. Margate did not ask her to sign it, of course, which explains why a few fragments of the bottom of the sheet could not be found where I found the others."

"I see the point," Chick said thoughtfully. "You may be right."

"It is further confirmed by another bit of evidence."

"What is that?"

"The bandage I found on the rectory veranda," said Nick. "It bore no evidence of having been bound around a wound, or sprain. Plainly enough, nevertheless, it had been wrapped around the left hand of a man."

"And you deduce from that?"

"Something quite suggestive," said Nick, smiling. "I happen to know that Andy Margate is left-handed."

"By Jove, that is doubly significant," Chick declared. "Did you recall that when making your investigations?"

"No. Not until I talked with Senator Barclay and learned about Garland."

"You suspect, then, that the girl was heard confiding in the priest."

"Exactly."

"And that she was abducted after leaving the rectory, and the priest afterward killed."

"Precisely."

"And that Garland was afterward lured to that locality, and this torn letter dropped in the opposite lots in order to so incriminate him, apparently, that he would be helplessly in the power of these rascals."

"That is my theory, Chick, and I'll bank on its being very close to the truth," Nick nodded.

"Gee! my money goes with yours, chief," said Patsy. "I wish I could place a real bet on it, instead of only a mental wager."

"I think you would win," Nick said a bit dryly.

Chick straightened up in his chair.

"Have you confided all of these points to Garland?" he asked abruptly.

"You bet I haven't," said Nick. "I'm taking no chance that a feeling of relief will betray, in case of his being watched, the scheme that I now have in view."

"I thought you had something up your sleeve," smiled Chick. "What is your scheme?"

Nick took a cigar from his pocket and lit it before replying.

"I'll tell you," he then said seriously. "Garland joined me here late yesterday afternoon. I had come here in disguise, providing that the house might be watched, which I have not taken the trouble to confirm, knowing it might be impossible."

"Quite likely."

"I talked with Garland about half an hour, merely to give my instructions. I then sent him out, wearing my garments and disguise, and he last night occupied my apartments in the Willard. He is to remain quartered there until I have cleaned up this affair. I remained here in his place, as well as in the garments belonging to him. You have observed, no doubt, that I'm wearing a new set of scenery, and that my suit case stands there in the corner."

"Yes, I noticed both," laughed Chick. "But what is your scheme?"

"A very simple one, though open to many possibilities," Nick replied. "Garland has a final appointment to-night with Andy Margate. He is to be met as before, and taken to the present quarters of that archscoundrel, where he undoubtedly is established, with his confederates in this job. He is expected to hand over eighty thousand dollars in return for the alleged photographs—but he will do nothing of the kind."

"You intend——"

"Garland is about my height and build," Nick cut in. "His cast of features resembles mine. It will require but very little artistic work with grease paints and powders

to turn me into a likeness of him that will pass muster under ordinary conditions."

"And you——"

"I mean that Garland will not keep the appointment," said Nick, with ominous intonation. "He is to come here this evening in disguise, but only to serve me as a model. He then will return to the Willard. I shall go in his place—to meet Andy Margate."

CHAPTER VII.

NICK CARTER'S VENTURE.

Nick Carter's project was a daring one, even though ventured against crooks of ordinary caliber. Against as lawless, determined, and desperate a knave as Andy Margate, who, if Nick's deductions and suspicions were correct, had not shrunk for an instant from killing a priest and abducting a girl to prevent the perversion of his knavish designs—against a man of that type, such a project was doubly bold and hazardous.

Nick Carter realized from the outset that he would carry his life in his hand. He realized, too, that it would be utterly vain to attempt to pursue the man and the motor car described by Garland.

That they would guard against anything of that kind not only was obvious to Nick, but he further reasoned that any attempt to do so would surely be detected, and result only in perverting his own more promising designs. He preferred to take his own chance, therefore, and to rely upon the other work about to be done by Chick Carter and Patsy.

Shortly before eight o'clock that evening, a tall man clad in black, wearing gold-bowed spectacles and a pointed beard, issued from the Grayling as if he were a resident in the house, and sauntered away through Vermont Avenue. This man was Harold Garland, wearing the garments and disguise of the detective, the same worn by Nick when he visited the office of the government engineer the previous day.

Nearly an hour later, or close upon nine o'clock, the light in Garland's apartments suddenly vanished. Half a minute later, wearing a soft felt hat, a long frieze overcoat, and a suit of plaid woolen, precisely the same garments worn by Garland when he visited Margate, Nick Carter emerged from the apartment house and strode toward the first corner east.

A man who was turning it just as Nick was approaching it gazed at him sharply, then smiled and bowed.

"Good evening, Garland," he said familiarly.

"Ah, good evening," Nick returned genially.

"I thought I recognized you. A misty night, this."

"Yes, quite so," said the detective.

They then had passed one another, scarce two feet between them, and in the bright glare from a near arc light, and Nick halted on the corner.

"By Jove, that's quite encouraging," he said to himself. "That man evidently is well acquainted with Garland. He felt sure that he recognized me. He saw me plainly, too, in the bright glare from this arc light. I also got by with the voice. Having done so under these conditions, I ought to succeed in fooling Margate. Yes, indeed, it was encouraging."

Nick was justified in congratulating himself, in fact, for he had, with consummate skill and artistic applications of paint and powder, transformed himself into an almost perfect likeness of the man he was aiming to impersonate.

It was, as the passing stranger's remark implied, a fit night for such an undertaking. A mist hung like a gray pall on the quiet night air. It obscured all but the brightest stars. A half-filled moon shone through it only faintly, surrounded with a great circle, like a halo around the head of a saint.

It was, in fact, a damp, chilly, and disagreeable November night.

Nick gazed up and down the avenue and through the side street. The latter was less brightly lighted. Lamps of motor cars could be seen in each direction on the avenue. They came and went, many of them passing him, but none showing any sign of stopping to pick him up.

Suddenly a clock on a neighboring church began to boom the hour—nine o'clock.

Nick counted the slow strokes of the bell, falling with sonorous reverberations on the night air. They brought to his mind the church and rectory visited the previous morning.

Nick thought of the white, upturned face of the murdered priest, found dead on his library floor. He thought of the missing girl and wondered what her fate had been.

His features hardened under these contemplations. His eyes took on a more threatening gleam and glitter. He was in a fit mood to face danger in behalf of justice, and bring to righteous punishment the miscreants guilty of these crimes.

A sudden glare of light shot across the avenue a block away. A limousine came quickly around the corner and approached the Grayling, but it did not stop. Its lamps, seen through the gray mist, were like the glowing eyes of an uncouth monster.

"By Jove, there comes my man," flashed through Nick's mind. "He came by the Grayling in order to see whether Garland's rooms are lighted. I'll turn up my collar to offset the bright light from that electric."

Nick did so, and then began to think he was mistaken. The rapidly moving limousine was swerving toward the opposite side of the avenue. Suddenly it made a quick turn, however, and sped directly toward the curbing on which the detective was standing.

The door flew open and a man thrust out his head.

"Get in!" he cried sharply. "Be quick!"

Nick sprang into the car and sank upon the seat. The door banged behind him.

"Let her go, Jimmy!" shouted his companion.

The car had not stopped, in fact, and it now sped on rapidly through the side street.

Nick's companion sprang up and gazed intently from the back window until more than a hundred yards had been covered. Any pursuing car or motor cycle would have been plainly visible to him. There was none, however, and the limousine turned again and sped toward Florida Avenue.

The man sat down and leaned from the open window on his side of the car, that on which Nick sat being closed.

"You're well away, Jimmy," he called to the driver. "There's nothing doing. Let her go lively."

Nick had been quick to see that this man was not masked, as when Garland had accompanied him. No sooner had he a good look at his dark, thin-featured face, more-

over, than Nick instantly recognized him. He had arrested him in New York more than a year before.

"Bartholomew Lombard better known as Batty Lombard," he said to himself. "The rat I took in for lifting a diamond in Tiffany's. I'm certainly in right for the present, at least. I wonder what other jailbird is driving the machine."

Nick could see only the back of his head and broad shoulders, his woolen cap and thick overcoat, with the collar turned up to his ears.

"What are you afraid of?" Nick asked, when the man turned and settled down beside him.

Lombard glanced sharply at him.

"Can't you guess?" he questioned, with a growl.

"I suppose you think I've put the police wise and that you may be followed," said Nick.

"That calls the turn," Lombard nodded. "I'm guarded against that all right."

"Well, that's not my style," Nick replied, cleverly imitating Garland's voice all the while. "I always do what I have agreed to do."

"Is that so?" questioned Lombard, with a groan. "Well, you sure have got a little something on most men, then."

"Are you the same man who met me before?"

"Don't I look it?"

"How can I tell? He wore a mask."

Lombard chuckled oddly, with a mischievous gleam in his narrow eyes. He drew from his pocket a black bag, replying a bit dryly:

"I'm the same gazabo and here's the same bandage that you wore. If it's all the same to you, Mr. Garland, I will slip it over your block as before."

"It's not all the same, by any means, but I suppose I must stand for it," Nick protested.

"Stand for it is right," said Lombard, rising. "I have to guard against your putting anything over on us. Safety first, you know. If you had the use of your lamps, you might serve us some scurvy trick sooner or later."

"As scurvy a trick, perhaps, as you rascals are serving me," Nick retorted.

"That's not half bad," Lombard returned. "We're letting you down easy. Some ginks would bleed you to a standstill. You're playing dead lucky, Mr. Garland."

"That's not my opinion."

"The which has not been asked for."

"Are we going to the same place as before?"

"That's what."

"Why——"

"Cut it now," Lombard interrupted. "There'll be time enough for a spiel after you get there. Sit back and keep quiet."

The rascal had drawn the black bag over Nick's head while speaking, and Nick was forced to comply with the last. He settled back in the cushioned corner and relapsed into silence.

Though enough air entered from the bottom for him to breathe freely, the thick black bag completely blinded him. It was like being enveloped in Stygian darkness, and Nick bent his mind upon trying to determine the course the limousine was taking.

That also proved entirely futile. He soon decided that many turns were being purposely made, and that they were not going direct to their destination.

For nearly half an hour, as well as he could judge, the car sped on and not a word came from his companion.

Nick then felt through the open window a more damp and chilly air, as if it came from the Potomac.

The varied noises of the city had been left far behind. Only the occasional distant clang of a trolley-car gong reached his listening ears. The road had become more rough. He knew that he was passing through one of the less thickly settled outskirts.

The car at length turned sharply, and Nick sensed that it was entering an inclosed area of some kind. Suddenly it stopped and he heard the driver spring to the ground. Lombard opened the door and seized the detective's wrist.

"Steady, now, and keep your trap closed," he said, with a growl. "Step out of the car. I'll guide you."

Nick obeyed without replying.

He felt his way from the car, and then the hand of the driver gripped his other arm. He felt the crunch of gravel under his feet, then the stone step of a doorway.

The tread of all three then fell upon bare planking, and Nick could sense that they had entered a building and were in a corridor of considerable size, which he determined from the sound of their footsteps on the floor.

Nick had taken only a few steps, however, when he felt the two men thrust him through another doorway. Their hands left his arms. He heard the crash of a closed door behind him—and then found himself alone and in sudden silence.

"What's the meaning of this?" he asked himself, recalling what Garland had told him of his own experiences. "This isn't quite in line with what he stated. Have these rascals——"

Nick held his breath for an instant.

The floor on which he stood was descending.

"An elevator!" flashed through his mind. "Garland mentioned an elevator, and that he was taken down to the room in which he met Margate. This must be the same place."

The descending floor stopped in a few seconds, so gently that Nick rightly inferred that electricity was the motive power. He reached out in each direction and could touch only—four bare walls.

"By Jove, I'll find out what kind of a box I'm in," he said to himself abruptly. "I'll not wait for these rats to show me."

Nick removed the black bag and still found himself in inky darkness. He could discover in no direction the faintest ray of light. He waited a few seconds, thinking he might be released from these stuffy quarters, but not a sound broke the tomblike silence.

Deciding not to use his searchlight, lest it might betray him if he was being covertly watched, Nick fished out a match from his pocket and lit it.

The flame revealed four bare walls of wood, a ceiling and floor of like planking, the whole forming a boxlike structure about five feet square. As well as he then could judge, from the brief flickering light from the match, there was no way to open it from the inside.

"Box is right, by Jove," he said to himself, with increasing suspicions. "I may be in more of a box than I bargained for right off the reel. Can it be that these rascals already suspect——"

A quick, metallic snap cut short Nick's train of thought.

A panel in one of the walls flew open, slipping quickly to one side. It revealed a window about a foot square and nearly six feet from the floor.

Through it came a flood of electric light from a corridor, only a small part of which could be seen by the detective.

Nick's attention was instantly claimed, moreover, by something more portentous—the head and face of a man gazing through the bright opening.

They were the head and face of—Andy Margate.

CHAPTER VIII.

CAUGHT IN A BOX.

Nick Carter gazed for a moment without speaking. The face of the knave peering in at him wore an expression the detective did not fancy.

Mingled malice, merciless hatred, and vicious exultation were pictured in every feature of Margate's white, hard-set face. His eyes had a gleam as cold and murderous as that reflected from a blade of steel. His thin, cruel lips were drawn like those of a dog about to bite.

"So you're here again, eh?" he questioned, breaking the momentary silence.

Nick eyed him sharply, suspecting the truth, yet still maintaining the part he had undertaken to play.

"Yes, as I agreed," he replied curtly. "Let me out. Why are you keeping me here?"

"Aren't you comfortable?"

"No. It's close and stuffy."

"It's not half as close and stuffy a box as you might land in," Margate said, with a malicious grin. "Haven't you thought of that?"

"I'm not thinking along those lines," Nick replied. "Come, come, Mr. Margate, let me out."

"Not yet," leered the rascal. "I want to talk with you. Have you brought the money agreed upon?"

"We'll discuss that in the room where I previously talked with you," said Nick. "I refuse to discuss it, or anything else, as long as you keep me in this place."

"Is that so?" sneered Margate. "Listen, then! When you leave it—you'll leave it for a worse place."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Can't you guess? Hold on! Keep your hands in front of you!"

Nick was stealthily reaching toward his hip pocket.

Margate's sneering voice had taken on a fierce and threatening ring. His right hand leaped into view at the lighted window, and a revolver was aimed point-blank at the detective's breast.

"Don't try to pull a gun, Carter, or you'll be a dead one on the instant," he now threatened sternly.

"Ah!" Nick exclaimed, casting subterfuge to the winds. "You know me, then."

"You bet I know you," sneered Margate, with vicious asperity. "I have mighty good cause to know you. I've been wise to you from the first—and I now have you where I want you. You're going to pay the price for what you put over on me a month ago."

"I see," Nick said coolly, despite the ominous outlook. "You're a very clever fellow, Margate, after all."

"Clever enough to get the best of you."

"So it appears," Nick agreed, bent upon learning just what the rascal knew of his movements and doings. "I did not suppose you were half as keen. You make me curious."

"I'll do more than that to you, Carter," scowled the other. "Curious about what?"

"How you discovered my identity. I thought my tracks were perfectly covered."

"You did, eh?"

"Otherwise, Margate, I would not be in this box," said Nick. "You can bet on that."

"It looks like a safe bet," Margate allowed, with a leer. "You're not half as crafty, Carter, as you think. Do you suppose for a moment that I would not make sure that Garland did not send for you?"

"He did not send for me," Nick replied carelessly, bent upon leading him on.

"I know he didn't—but Senator Barclay did."

"Ah!"

"I'll soon have both where I want them—as I've got you!" Margate exultantly added.

"Admitting that, which now seems quite probable, I don't see how you discovered that Senator Barclay sent for me," said Nick, pretending he was merely puzzled and had no covert design.

"You don't, eh?" leered Margate, evidently pleased to discuss his own cunning. "I'll tell you how."

"Well, I'm listening."

"I sent a man to watch your New York residence."

"Ah!"

"I knew that if any detective was employed, you would be the one."

"I see."

"And you were seen when you left home alone with a suit case and took the train for Washington," Margate went on sneeringly. "You were shadowed when you arrived at the Willard. You were watched throughout yesterday. You were seen with Fallon, the infernal dick, dipping into a mess you had better kept out of. You were seen going in disguise to Garland's office, and afterward to his rooms in the Grayling, where he joined you about five o'clock. You were seen leaving and returning to the Willard, where you remained until to-night, when you went to his rooms again and fixed yourself up to turn this trick on me."

Nick Carter's face evinced no sign of the satisfaction he now felt.

It was obvious to him that Margate had blundered and been deceived, in spite of his precautions. He evidently had, or one of his confederates, been watching Garland in the disguise of the detective, and that none of them suspected the ruse Nick had adopted.

It was perfectly plain, therefore, that the presence of Chick and Patsy in Washington was not suspected, and no steps having been taken by the rascals to guard against what they might accomplish, Nick now felt reasonably sure that one or both of them would make good along the lines he had laid out. His own situation did not look nearly as dark as it had before evoking these disclosures, and Nick was content to meet it as he found it.

The situation took a more threatening turn, however, sooner than he really expected.

Seeing Nick apparently nonplused by what he had heard, Margate laughed exultantly and quickly added:

"But you'll turn no trick on me, Carter, take my word for it. The boot is on the other leg. I still have Garland where I want him, as well as you. The newspapers tell

me all that you have disclosed. I'll get Garland later—and finish you at once."

"Don't hurry, Margate," Nick put in coolly. "I'm in no rush."

"But I am!" snapped the scowling miscreant. "I'm itching to get even with you, to pay you for what you have done to me, to see you dead at my feet. It won't be long, Carter, not long. You shall pay the price. Take it from me—you shall pay the price!"

The threatening face vanished like a flash with the last.

The panel flew back into place with a sharp, ominous click.

Nick Carter found himself again in inky darkness.

He stepped quickly to the opposite wall and listened at the closed panel.

He now could hear Margate's voice in the adjoining corridor, followed by others replying. They told him only too plainly what fate the miscreants had in view for him.

"The sooner it's done, Batty, the better," Margate was forcibly saying. "We'll wait only for Nell to show up. I want her here when we put out his light. That's the only sure way to prevent her from peaching, or any one else. Put them in the same boat with you. Then they'll never squeal."

"That's right, too, Andy," declared a voice which Nick recognized as that of the burly chauffeur.

"Sure it's right, Baldwin," Margate returned.

"But where is she, Andy?" Lombard demanded. "You must have seen her this evening. She hasn't had charge of the girl since afternoon. When will she show up?"

"By Jove, they have Lottie Trent here, also," thought Nick. "There would be something doing, all right, if I could break out of this thing."

Listening while indulging in these thoughts, Nick heard Margate reply:

"I left her in Brady's just before coming out here, before seeing you and Baldwin start out on this job. She had had no supper, so waited to get it. She may show up at any moment."

"But Carter has guns, Andy, and will put up a fight. If——"

"Hang his guns!" Margate cut in harshly. "He'll get no chance to use them. We'll not need a gun."

"How can you fix him?"

"Dead easy. We'll attach the hose to the gas meter and run it to the trap. It will reach from the meter to the elevator shaft. We'll bore a hole for it through the plank ceiling. Carter then can't stop the flow of gas. We'll suffocate him like a rat in a copper boiler."

"That's the stuff," growled Baldwin approvingly. "Dead easy is right."

"Come out to the office," Margate added. "We'll wait there till Nell comes in."

"But the girl——"

"We'll silence her later. She can't get out. I've made sure of that. Come out to the office."

Nick heard their heavy tread through the corridor and up a short flight of stairs, which convinced him that he was in the basement of some building.

"By Jove, I've got to make a bid for liberty, at least," he said to himself.

Whipping out his electric searchlight, he at once began a hurried inspection of the four walls and the section where the panel was located. He saw plainly that the trap had been constructed on a small elevator, and so made that it could be opened only from the outside. He quickly found, moreover, that the planking was of sufficient strength to preclude escape, nor could he start the panel in either direction.

"By gracious, it don't look very promising," Nick muttered, grim and frowning. "But there'll be some gun play, all right, if the rascals try to bore a hole through this ceiling. I'll foil them yet, barring——"

Nick then was given the surprise of his life.

A sharp click broke his train of thought. The door of the trap flew open and a girl stood directly in front of him in the lighted corridor.

She was deathly pale and frightfully excited, but her eyes were aglow with fierce determination. Her hair and garments were in disorder. Her lace collar was stained with blood. She was trembling from head to foot with frantic eagerness.

"I heard them—I know!" she wildly whispered. "I'm Lottie Trent. I was imprisoned in that room opposite. I picked the lock with a hairpin. I had seen them open this door and knew you could not——"

Her torrent of words was cut short by the sudden sharp crack of a revolver.

A bullet splintered the woodwork above her head.

"They've heard me!" she gasped.

Nick already had seized her and drawn her into the trap, beyond reach of bullet from that end of the corridor where Margate and his two confederates were plunging down a low flight of stairs.

"Wait here!" Nick commanded, forcing the girl to one corner and snatching out both of his revolvers. "I'll give these rats a taste of their own medicine."

CHAPTER IX.

BETWEEN TWO FIRES.

Chick Carter and Patsy Garvan, though this case was one in which nearly all of the work had devolved upon Nick Carter himself, were not idle while their chief was engaged as described.

Following the instructions given him, Patsy spent most of the day in running down the place where Margate had obtained a large photographic camera, as Nick had been led to suspect.

Patsy finally found that such a camera had been bought ten days before from a pawnbroker in one of the lower sections of the city, and that the purchaser was a man of Margate's description.

The pawnbroker stated that he had not left his address, however, but had paid for the camera and sent an expressman to get it, but whose name the pawnbroker did not know.

Patsy then began a vigorous hunt for the expressman, but his efforts were not rewarded until nearly nine in the evening, when he found the man he was seeking.

This man then informed him that he had taken the camera to a building out Georgetown way, which had been vacated a short time before by a manufacturing concern that had failed in business, and which had recently been rented by parties who contemplated moving into it for a similar business, but who were not yet under way.

Patsy needed to hear no more than that. He learned precisely where the building was located, thanked the

expressman for his information, and then headed for the trolley-car line running out there.

"It's after nine, and the chief must have left the Grayling," he shrewdly reasoned. "If there is anything doing, it will be in that same building. I'll hike out there at once, in case I am needed."

It was half past nine when Patsy boarded a trolley car, and he then was given a surprise.

In one corner of it sat—Chick Carter.

He was not alone.

His companion was a flashily clad blonde of about thirty, with yellow hair and rouged cheeks, and whose rather bleared eyes and maudlin expression plainly denoted that she had been looking on the wine when it is red in the cup.

"Gee whiz!" thought Patsy, immensely tickled for more reasons than one. "Where did he get next to that? She's a bird with wilted plumage. He looks all right, but she certainly has her load. There must be something doing, or he wouldn't be heading out this way with her. But where did he gather her in? That's what puzzles me."

Their eyes met a moment later, but no observable sign passed between the two. A momentary twinkle in Chick's eyes, however, gave Patsy the only needed cue.

Nick Carter's anticipations were speedily verified when Chick, visiting Larry Trent in his prison cell that afternoon, told the convict what had befallen his sister, and of the other crimes of which Margate was guilty.

Resenting the wrong done the girl, Trent informed Chick that his sister had known Margate only under the name of Matt Gaffney; that the latter had lodged in the same house with her, and that they had been quite friendly, also that Margate could be found almost every evening in a red disguise in a saloon and restaurant run by one Phil Brady, in a red-light section of the city.

Chick thus obtained enough information as he thought would serve his purpose, and eight o'clock that evening found him watching Brady's establishment from the opposite side of the street.

Half an hour brought no results, however, and Chick then sauntered into the saloon and bought a drink, carelessly asking the bartender:

"Seen Gaffney this evening?"

"Not yet," was the reply. "But he'll soon show up. There's a skirt waiting for him in the last booth."

Chick took a look at her with the aid of the bar mirror.

"She's a new one to me," he said indifferently.

"She ain't new around here," grinned the bartender. "That's Nell Breen."

Chick turned away without another question and repaired to his former vantage point across the street.

Ten minutes later he saw Margate enter the saloon and talk a few moments with the woman, buying a drink for both.

Margate then came out, hastening to a limousine that had stopped at a near corner. He talked earnestly with the driver and one passenger for a short time and then hurried away.

The limousine departed in the opposite direction.

Chick made one of his characteristic clever moves. He scribbled a few words on a blank card with a lead pencil, then hurried to the booth in which Nell Breen was sipping a Martini and waiting for pork chops.

"Here, Nell, read that," he whispered impressively, slipping her the card. "Andy sent me in with it."

The woman looked up suspiciously, then read the card:

"NELL: This fellow is all right. Bring him along. I have a use for him. Hastily, ANDY."

"Who gave you this?" Nell demanded, gazing again, but less suspiciously.

Chick had taken a chance that she was to rejoin Margate later, or would know where to find him.

"Oh, get wise, get wise, kid," he said significantly. "Matt Gaffney sent me in, or Andy Margate, if that hits you any better. Can't you read it?"

"Why didn't he come in with you?"

"He hadn't time," Chick glibly explained. "He was spieling to two blokes in a taxi. He sent them away and was in a big rush himself. He said you'd know what to do when you saw his note. What am I up against, anyway?"

Chick began to scowl—and the woman then began to laugh. She had taken just enough liquor to feel silly, and want more.

"He wants me to bring you out, eh?" she asked.

"That's what he said. You can read it, can't you?"

"Sure I can read it," grinned Nell. "But I'm not going out there till I've had my feed. You can bet your boots on that."

"I'm a bit hungry myself," Chick vouchsafed.

"Sit down and order something. Say, what's your moniker?"

"Sandy Billings. I've known Andy from 'way back. Will you wrap yourself around another drink?"

"Sure! Make it dry."

With the way thus cleverly paved, Chick afterward found it easy walking. Nell Breen made good in so far as Chick desired. She left the car at the proper point and conducted him about a quarter mile to the building then the scene of episodes already described.

Patsy Garvan followed them with no great need for caution, owing to the woman's intoxication.

They entered a yard leading to an end door of the somewhat ancient stone building. The limousine was one of the first things to catch Chick's eye, and it told him all he then wanted to know.

He glanced back and saw Patsy stealing after him.

"Must we ring, or knock?" he asked, as he approached the door with the reeling woman.

"Neizer," she muttered, with maudlin thickness. "I've gotta key."

"Let's have it," Chick said quietly. "You couldn't find the keyhole."

"I'll be dead lucky if I find the key," said Nell, feeling for a pocket in her skirt.

She presently found it and produced the key, nevertheless, placing it in the detective's hand.

Chick tried to insert it noiselessly into the lock, and stopped—for the hundredth part of a second.

There came from within, sending a thrill through him from head to foot—the sudden, sharp, spiteful crack of a revolver.

Patsy also heard it, and three quick leaps brought him to Chick's side.

Both swept the woman aside, throwing her to the ground, and Chick unlocked the door and threw it open.

Their gaze fell upon a lighted corridor, a low flight

of stairs leading down to it, and upon Margate, Lombard, and Baldwin, now shooting wildly at a man crouching near what appeared to be a narrow door.

"There's Nick!" Chick yelled. "At them, Patsy!"

Both dashed into the corridor, revolvers in hand.

Batty Lombard fell at that moment, pierced with a bullet from Nick's revolver.

Baldwin turned to flee—only to find himself caught between two fires. He dropped his revolver to the floor and threw up his hands.

Andy Margate did nothing of the kind. He suddenly seemed to grasp the altered situation. He reached into his vest pocket and clapped something to his mouth.

Then he dropped as if struck by lightning, landing with a thud on the floor, face up.

An empty vial was rolling to one side, glistening in the bright light.

Nick approached, shaking hands with Chick and Patsy, and then he gazed down at the vial and the white, upturned face.

"Paying the price—that's right," he said a bit grimly. "He has saved us the trouble. He spoke the truth for once in his life. The price has been paid."

Midnight saw Baldwin and Nell Breen lodged in a prison cell, Lombard dying in a hospital, and Andy Margate laid out temporarily in the back room of a city undertaker, his bier a plank, his covering a sheet.

Lombard confessed before he died, but it needs no record in these pages. For it confirmed in nearly every detail the theories of Nick Carter, as already set forth in his discussion of his suspicions and deductions.

The relief of Garland, as well as that of Senator Barclay and Stella, the gratitude of all for Nick and his assistants—these go without saying, as Nick remarked when they attempted to thank him.

"It's satisfaction enough for me that we have canned Andy Margate," he added. "Lombard will not live till morning, moreover, and the others will get what's coming to them. Who could ask more in behalf of justice?"

THE END.

"On Death's Trail; or, Nick Carter's Strangest Case," will be the title of the long, complete story that you will find in the next issue, No. 147, of the NICK CARTER STORIES, out July 3d. In this story are recounted some of the most interesting adventures which have ever befallen the famous detective and his almost equally famous assistants. Then, too, there will be the usual installment of a corking good serial, together with several short but interesting and instructive articles.

FIGHTING WITH CHEESE.

The most remarkable ammunition ever heard of was used by the celebrated Commodore Coe, of the Montevidian navy, who, in an engagement with Admiral Brown, of the Buenos Aireau service, fired every shot from his lockers.

"What shall we do, sir?" asked his first lieutenant.

It looked as if Coe would have to strike his colors, when it occurred to his first lieutenant to use Dutch cheese as cannon balls. There happened to be a large quantity of these on board, and in a few minutes the fire of the old *Santa Maria*—Coe's ship—which had ceased entirely, was reopened, and Admiral Brown found more shot flying over his head. Directly, one of them struck his mainmast, and, as it did so, shattered and flew in every direction.

"What the dickens is the enemy firing?" asked Brown.

But nobody could tell. Directly another came in through a port and killed two men who were near him, and then, striking the opposite bulwarks, burst into pieces.

Brown believed it to be some newfangled paixhan or other, and as four or five more of them came slap through his sails, he gave orders to fill away, and actually backed out of the fight, receiving a parting broadside of Dutch cheese.

Where's the Commandant?

By C. C. WADDELL.

(This interesting story was commenced in No. 140 of NICK CARTER STORIES. Back numbers can always be obtained from your news dealer or the publishers.)

CHAPTER XXVII.

STRANGE PRECAUTIONS.

While Grail was shaving, at that two-minute gait which, once acquired at West Point, is never forgotten, a sudden suggestion came to him, and he laid down his razor to draft out on a telegraph blank a composition, which seemed, from the way he frowned and bit his pen over it, to require careful consideration.

Finishing it at last, he slipped it into a sealed envelope, and when he had completed his dressing, carried it and the note from Appleby over to the post-telegraph office.

The Appleby note he laid on the table under a paper weight.

"Sergeant," he said to the man in charge, "I want you to keep your eye on that paper, and if it disappears, instantly transmit this to the address within." He handed over the sealed envelope.

The man stared at him as though he thought he had suddenly gone crazy. "If the paper disappears?" he gasped.

"Exactly." Grail looked at him sternly. "And let there be no mistake in carrying out instructions, please. As you may surmise, there are strange things going on, and much may depend on you to-night. I repeat, if the paper on the desk disappears, you are to send without delay the dispatch in that sealed envelope."

Then he started for the waiting taxi; but the operator halted him at the door.

"Oh, by the way, captain," he called, "Miss Vedant was trying to get you several times this afternoon." A bit confused by Grail's impressive manner and the peculiar instructions given him, he did not think to add that the call had come by wireless.

"Miss Vedant?" The adjutant swung around, his hand on the knob. "Did she leave any message for me?"

"No, sir. Merely said she would call again."

"Very well. It makes no difference now. I shall probably see her in person in ten or fifteen minutes."

Whirling uptown with Cato in the cab, he kept pondering over the matter, wondering why Meredith had been so anxious to communicate with him, and trying to piece out an answer from the facts at his disposal.

Then he suddenly slapped his knee, as what seemed to be a solution broke upon him.

"Cato," he exclaimed, "do you remember what Simmons was saying when he was interrupted by that pistol shot, and the arrival of the Japs?"

"Something about a family reunion between the colonel and his daughter, wasn't it, sir?"

"Yes; the exact words, as I remember, were that it would be quite a family reunion to have father and daughter under——" Then he stopped. "Cato, what he was about to say was 'under one roof.' Don't you see it, man? Colonel Vedant was taken from the hut last night to the home of Otto Schilder."

Cato looked puzzled. "Is Mr. Schilder one of the gang, too?" he demanded.

"No." He hesitated, then added, in a lower tone: "But, as I have known from the beginning, a member of Schilder's household has long been on terms of clandestine friendship with this man Dabney, or Rezonoff. She has, in fact, been his chief aid in all this matter."

"She?" Cato glanced at him.

"Yes; Mrs. Schilder. There is no longer any use in trying to protect her, for I gather from the circumstances that her husband already knows all. To my mind, that is the explanation of his summoning Appleby to his office this afternoon, and of the conference of officers at the house to-night. He probably wants to arrange some plan to hush the affair up with as little scandal as possible.

"I should not be surprised, too," he went on, "to learn that it was Miss Vedant who discovered the secret of the colonel's presence in the house; for she is quick-witted enough to have outgeneraled even so crafty a schemer as that woman. Yes, that must be it," he repeated; "she found it out and tried to communicate with me, but, failing in that, finally turned to Schilder."

"Well, we'll know for certain in a minute now," said Cato, as the cab halted under the porte-cochère; "for here we are."

The door swung open to them, as they climbed the steps.

"If you please, sir," the man who admitted them said to Grail, "Miss Vedant wishes to see you at once. Will you follow me? She is in madame's boudoir." Then, with less ceremony, he directed Sergeant Cato to accompany another man to a room belowstairs.

Up a softly carpeted flight Grail was led by his guide, and along the hall; then the man, drawing aside heavy portières, disclosed a room suffused with a dim, rosy light.

Grail took a step forward, but halted as he saw no one there. Before he could turn, however, he was dealt a stunning blow over the head. He reeled, threw up his hands to clutch vainly at the air, then felt himself falling, and knew no more.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A MEETING.

As Meredith Vedant had halted, fear-stricken, paralyzed with terror at her startling discovery in the lonely attic, a sudden flash of lightning from the rising storm blazed down through the windows overhead, and for a second illuminated the face of the prostrate prisoner.

It was Ormsby Grail!

Instantly her trepidation, the swooning weakness she had felt coming over her, was gone, swallowed up, like her feminine apprehensions in coming to the place, in a greater emotion.

He was in danger. He was bound and helpless. He needed her aid. Hurriedly she flung herself down beside him, and wrenched away the gag from his lips, meanwhile calling on him breathlessly to tell her what had happened.

But he made no answer. His head rolled from side to side at her touch.

She drew back with a gasp. Was he dead? But no; a long-drawn sigh, and the beating of his heart as she laid her ear to his chest, reassured her on that point.

Still, he was insensible, injured—perhaps fatally. He must have proper aid and attention at once; and where could she get it in this house, which was only too evidently dominated by his enemies and hers?

For a moment her head drooped helplessly; then, with quick recollection, she sprang to the wireless instrument.

Feverishly she twisted the knobs, and sent in call after call to the post; but her only response was an ear-splitting crackling and snapping. There was too much electricity in the air; the "static" was baffling her.

Still, useless though she knew the attempt to be, she kept on sending the call, until at last she was interrupted by the sound of a mutter behind her, and, turning, saw, in the lightning flashes, Grail halfway up on one elbow.

"That chemist is crazy"—his words came jerkily—"that wasn't what he said it was; that was a picric-acid compound, and the Russians are adepts with picric. Why didn't I think of that before?"

The girl sprang toward him. "Ormsby! Ormsby!" she cried, slipping her arm under him and supporting his head on her shoulder. "Tell me you are not badly hurt!"

But he paid no heed. His befogged brain had room only for the calculations upon which he was engaged.

"I understand the trick about the typewriting, too, now," he went on. "In case the explosive failed to work, they had another come-back. By imitating the defects of Schilder's typewriter, and using his letterhead, they could always, as a last resource, throw suspicion on him. I'll bet, though, the woman was responsible for that touch, Cato; she is just the sort to——"

He halted suddenly, realizing, as his wits cleared, that it was not Cato's strong arm supporting him, nor Cato's gruff voice so beseechingly imploring him.

He raised his head bewilderedly to see, and a kindly flash of lightning showed him her face.

"Meredith!" he exclaimed. "Are you a prisoner, too?"

"No, no!" she cried. "I am here to help you, if I can. But tell me first that you are not hurt?"

"Hurt?" he scoffed, although as a matter of fact his head was still dazed and ringing from the blow it had received. "Help me loosen this strap about my feet, and I'll show you how little I am hurt."

Then, while she relieved him of his remaining bonds, and assisted him to stand, he drew from her the story of how she had happened to come to his rescue.

"My dear girl," he murmured tenderly, and although neither of them could tell just how it happened, another moment found them in each other's arms.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE WAY.

"We are neglecting the colonel!" said Grail presently. "Come, we must lose no time in releasing him."

"Father?" She stared at him.

"Yes. I am satisfied that he is somewhere here, held a prisoner just as I was."

As he spoke, he began lighting matches, and holding them above his head; and in a moment he caught sight of the strong room, with its iron-sheathed door.

"What is that?" he inquired. Then, as Meredith told him, he stepped over to inspect it.

Meredith hesitated. "But, Ormsby," she faltered, "the place is full of rats. I heard them when I stood at the door to-day."

"It was not rats, my dear. It was doubtless your father trying to attract your attention. It was an ideal place of incarceration, and they have had him here ever since last night, when you saw the two men leave in the automobile, whom you took for burglars."

Thus assured, Meredith lost no time in opening the door herself; it was fastened merely by a heavy bolt, and the lock was broken; but, to Grail's intense surprise, although there was ample evidence there of a recent prisoner, the place was empty.

"By Jove!" ejaculated Grail, glancing about at the iron-sheathed walls, and high-up, narrow window. "Impossible as it seems, the colonel must have managed to escape. How any one of his build, though, could have——"

He ceased at the abrupt, warning clutch of Meredith's hand on his arm. "Some one is coming!" she whispered tensely.

Grail thrust her behind him, and, closing the door of the strong room to a crack, listened. Unquestionably there were footsteps on the stairs, and, looking out he could see the gleam of an electric flash light playing against the ceiling. What new danger menaced them now?

The steps came on; the ray of the flash light descended until it spread across the floor; then Grail received one of the surprises of his life.

Through the door, breathing a little heavily from their climb, came Otto Schilder and Colonel Vedart.

They paused at the threshold, a trifle perplexedly; then came on toward the strong room.

"If they have put Grail in here, though," muttered the colonel, "they must have discovered my escape."

The adjutant and Meredith waited no longer. Quickly stepping out, they disclosed themselves; and, while Meredith went to her father's arms, Grail obtained from Schilder some rather enlightening explanations.

"My wife, you must understand, Captain Grail," said the foundryman, "has a brother, Ivan Rezonoff, to whom she is devotedly attached, but whom, on account of his profession, I have forbidden her to have anything to do with. I am a loyal American citizen, and I stand for no spying by the emissaries of any foreign government. Recently, though, I learned that Rezonoff was in Brentford under an assumed name; and before I could make up my mind just what course to take in the matter, the colonel's abduction occurred.

"I was satisfied that Rezonoff had engineered it," he continued, "from the fact that my wife had induced me to employ several of her countrymen at the plant; but I determined to say nothing until I could confirm my suspicions. Last night I discovered that my brother-in-law and two other men had secretly visited the house, and by putting two and two together I finally reached the conclusion that it was for the purpose of secreting the colonel on these premises. I could find out nothing from the servants, since they are all under Mrs. Schilder's domination; but by conducting a quiet search on my own hook, I eventually found the colonel, released him, and for the last two hours have had him in my apartment, restoring him and getting him in shape after his experiences.

"I also kept on the watch for developments in the meantime," he went on, "and by cross-examining one of the footmen who appeared to me to be acting suspiciously, forced him to confess what had befallen you and your companion. The colonel and I then came here at once to liberate you; and since the sergeant, as I understand, is in the cellar, we will proceed there at once to set him free, also.

"First, however"—he turned so as to include the colonel in his remarks—"I wish to consult you gentlemen in regard to future steps. I make no plea for Rezonoff, of course; he must be dealt with as you see fit. But I do hope that some way can be found to cover up Mrs. Schilder's folly, and——"

"Don't worry about that, dear Otto," interrupted a taunting voice from the head of the stairs. "The way is here!"

CHAPTER XXX.

THE EXPIATION.

Turning in the flood of light which suddenly burst on them, the surprised four saw Rezonoff and his accomplice, Pepernik, each with a flash light in one hand and a big revolver in the other. Catlike, the Russians had crept up the stairs, and had caught their quarry napping.

"Hands up, there!" Rezonoff snapped. "I don't believe any of you are armed, but all the same, I am taking no chances. Pepernik, step over and search those men."

The ceremony concluded to his satisfaction, he lowered his gun, and, stepping forward, swept the faces in front of him with a grin of malicious triumph.

"Rats in a trap, eh?" His tone was savage, pitiless. "Well, like rats you shall perish. The old man there was to have been my only victim; but since you all have—what is the American phrase? Ah, yes—'butted in,' you will all—even you, Otto—have to share his fate. I shall lock you all in up here, and then set fire to the house. Already there are inflammables in every room below, the nearest fire-alarm boxes are disconnected, and all surrounding telephone wires cut. The blaze will get a rare start, I assure you."

Involuntarily, Schilder, Meredith, and her father recoiled before such fiendish malice. Only Grail held himself unmoved.

"Ah, captain?" The Russian turned to him. "You doubt me, eh? You don't think I will do what I say? Well, I will show you. I go now to set the torch."

"No; I don't think so!" There was something in Grail's quiet tone which held the other in spite of himself.

"I won't, eh? Why not?"

"Because, despite the cleverness of the note you sent me to-night, I suspected it was a forgery, and left it with the telegraph operator at the fort, instructing him, in case it disappeared, to transmit without delay a dispatch I left with him at the same time.

"The dispatch," he continued, "was to our secretary of state at Washington, giving a full account of your acts of the past three days, and asking him to communicate them to the Russian ambassador. So, Captain Rezonoff, inasmuch as you have already exceeded your instructions, and, as the agent of your government, been guilty of an outrage which must seriously embarrass the Russian foreign office, I do not think you will care to go to such extremes as you threaten."

The emissary's face paled. He knew what it meant to fail in such a mission as he had undertaken—to be recalled in disgrace.

"The Russian government," Grail added pointedly, "will hardly countenance criminal acts on the part of one of its emissaries, done for purposes of private revenge. More than that, Rezonoff, you know that the affair in which Colonel Vedant was involved, many years ago, in Russia, affected his honor, and that he acquitted himself with honor. Your present attempts at a belated revenge are the acts of a vindictive and dishonorable man. It looks very bad for you!"

Captain Rezonoff took a step forward, and gazed at Grail anxiously. "Has that message been sent to Washington?" he asked chokingly.

"Many hours ago, I believe," returned Grail quietly. "It has surely been sent if your forged letter disappeared, as you planned to have it, and if the——"

But there was no need for Grail to say more. There came to their ears a swish of silken skirts on the stairway, and Mrs. Schilder, in an elaborate dinner gown, but pale and agitated, burst in upon them.

She paid no heed to any of the others, but swiftly singling out her brother, thrust a telegram toward him.

He gave one glance at it, then, crumpling it in his hand, dropped it to the floor.

"What does it mean, Ivan?" the woman cried, clinging to him hysterically. "What does it mean?"

He put her away from him, nodding over his shoulder to Schilder to take her.

"Believe me, gentlemen"—he swept the group with a glance—"my sister had no idea of my full intentions. She thought it only ordinary secret-service work, and was chiefly concerned with fear that her husband would find out what she was doing. I deceived her as to my object. Russia has no use for failures! I know what my duty is!"

And, before any one could intervene, he moved briskly out of the attic and down the stairs.

"Quick!" cried Colonel Vedant. "The man will escape!"

Grail raised a restraining hand. "I don't think he cares to get away," he said quietly.

The look in the adjutant's face held them all spell-bound. Mrs. Schilder clung to her husband, her face as white as chalk. Pepernik, the conspirator, stood silent and nonplused, making no effort to leave the room. Every eye was upon him when suddenly, from below, in one of the larger apartments, came the muffled report of a revolver.

Mrs. Schilder swooned, without a cry. Meredith Vedant gazed with fascination, silently, at the imperturbable countenance of the adjutant. The colonel and the adjutant, grim fighting men, turned cold, inquiring looks upon the white and trembling Pepernik. The man seemed to feel their question, and he raised his hands in a weak gesture of helplessness. "I—I have not the courage of Captain Rezonoff," he muttered. "I surrender. Send for your police."

Grail took the revolver which the man held out weakly, then turned and went downstairs to the telephone.

THE END.

AN ODD GHOST STORY.

"It is strange," said my grandfather one winter's evening, as we sat by the log fire, roasting chestnuts and watching the flames leaping and dancing in harmony with the music of the crackling of the fuel and the bursting of the nuts. "I was saying, Tom, that it was strange that the trivial incidents and events of one's early life stand out so clearly through all the years that have slipped by, and seem as vivid and real as the things of yesterday."

Then grandfather stopped and looked at the fire, evidently in deep thought, from which we children knew from past experience he would evolve some story which would call for all our interest and attention.

And so it proved, for, rousing himself suddenly, he hurried into a narrative at once strange and interesting.

"Yes," he said, "ghost stories are, as a rule, capable of explanation. I know it for a fact. If only those who see the apparition were to exert a little presence of mind, it would be possible for them to solve what they precipitately put down as supernatural and mysterious.

"I remember when I was a young man that I received an urgent invitation from a very valued friend to spend a couple of weeks at his father's house at Mobberley. Of course, I responded most willingly, the more so that I had never been to his place before, although I had heard much of it. We traveled by coaches in those days, and a journey from London to the north of Lincolnshire was no unconsidered trifle, I can assure you. However, in a few days I found myself speeding up the drive which led to the ancestral home of the Arden Howard family, and was, in truth, highly gratified at the hearty reception my friend and his people extended to me.

"There was no event of unusual interest for some days. Hunting, shooting, and skating parties were organized, and in a downright old-fashioned way we young people did justice to the entertainment so lavishly provided.

"But it so happened that one day during the first week of my stay, and some few days before Christmas, I met with a slight accident while on the ice, and a sprained ankle prevented me from further indulging in outside sports for the remainder of my stay. Nevertheless, I insisted that my inability to join them should in no way deter my companions from following their own sweet will. Thus it happened that one evening I was the sole occupant of the great hall, which was, in point of fact, the largest room in the whole house, and a most imposing apartment it was. The lofty ceiling was supported by massive beams of oak finely carved, and blackened by the smoke of centuries, while hanging round its walls were some of the most beautiful tapestries I

have ever seen. At intervals were placed suits of armor, shields, swords, spears, and other warlike implements, which shone and glistened in the glow of the immense fire which burned in the open hearth.

"For a while I had occupied myself with a book, sitting far back in the chimney corner, in order to avoid, as much as possible, the drafts which seemed to steal upon one from all quarters; but as it grew dusk I threw it aside, and fell into a state of musing, which must have lasted some considerable time, since I found afterward that my pipe, which I had just filled, was empty when I roused myself. The immediate cause of my arousal is the point of my tale, which is most interesting and curious. I was, as I said, sitting far in the chimney recess—where the light of the fire, which made more or less visible the whole of the room, was unable to penetrate—and was speculating on the various objects of interest the place contained, when a door at the farther end of the room was cautiously opened, and a figure arrayed in a garment of white noiselessly entered and glided over the stone floor. It came straight across the apartment, and casting a furtive glance round, took from its place on the wall what in the distance seemed a long dagger, and in another moment it was gone—disappearing, it would seem, behind the tapestry hangings.

"You may judge I was somewhat startled at the apparition, yet being curious to see for myself what further would happen, I sat immovable for the period of—it may have been—fifteen minutes, when I was both shocked and horrified to see the figure return, with the same noiseless tread, clutching the dagger in its hand; while the drapery, the hand, and the dagger itself were now covered with stains of blood. Before replacing it, however, the figure wiped the blade upon its dress, and left thereon a most ghastly and appalling stain. Then, with a significant, almost noiseless laugh, it withdrew as it had come. If I was startled at first, you may judge that the 'creepy' sensation was not a little augmented by the second appearance, and I had come to no satisfactory solution of the matter, when my friend, returning, entered the hall, and burst into an excited account of his afternoon's sport.

"That night I questioned the family as to the ghostly visitor, but found that the house was quite free from any such tradition, not even possessing, as most old country houses do, a haunted chamber; and the family were as much astonished at my vision as I was myself. They had never heard of any such apparition, and for some time stoutly held that I had fallen asleep and dreamed the whole thing. Finally it was agreed that on the following day Herbert and I should watch together, and accordingly, at the same hour next day, we stationed ourselves in the chimney recess to await events; but we waited in vain.

"Three days we watched thus, and for three days I endured the good-natured banter of the whole family; but on the fourth day—Christmas Eve—our patience was rewarded, for scarcely had we settled into comfortable shape, when the ghost walked. Never shall I forget my companion's face as the door opened, disclosing the form swathed in white. Hitherto he had been skeptical, and was the most aggressive of my many tormentors; yet I can now see how his eyes became fixed and his ruddy face paled before the dimly outlined form, which, with many a sidelong, cautious glance, neared the spot it had visited when I first observed it. So still and deathlike was the silence, that the crackling of the log startled us, and I believe we both felt as though 'our each particular hair' was standing on end, as the white arm of the figure drew out the dagger from its sheath; it certainly is true we drew breath more easily when the door was once more closed. Still, we were determined to unravel the mystery, and so with tremulous steps we followed our unearthly visitant. Herbert was familiar with the passage along which we hurried, through a concealed door, into a large courtyard, from which the various outbuildings were entered.

"There was just light enough to enable us to discern the movements of the object we were tracking. Leaving the yard, it entered a building opposite our point of observation. Immediately there was a scuffling sound as of some one struggling, and, terrified and alarmed, we rushed across the yard. What a spectacle we beheld! Never shall I forget the sight which met our gaze. The figure in white was stooping over a living form, which emitted the most horrifying cries and sounds that ever fell on mortal ears. One hand was on the throat, and in the other was the uplifted weapon of destruction.

"As we looked we seemed to gain fresh courage, and rushed forward to prevent, if possible, the coming blow, but as we entered, the hand dropped, and the dagger entered the throat. Then, with one terrible shriek and an unavailing struggle, the eyes closed and the living, animate form became forever still. There, facing us, stood the form in white, with the dreadful instrument now dripping blood still in his hands. Yet neither of us moved until, with a strange gesture, it spoke thus: 'Oh, Mr. Herbert, sir; please, sir; indeed, sir; I'm awful sorry, sir, that I used this, sir, but them other knives ain't a bit sharp, an' them 'ere suckin' pigs wants to be dealt with quicklike. An' please, sir, don't tell master as 'ow I used this, or 'e'll be after giving me notice to quit. An' please, sir, indeed, Mr. Herbert, sir, I'll never do it agen, sir."

"The fact of the matter was, that the cook, having to provide sucking pigs for dinner, clandestinely purloined one of the sharpest instruments, in order to overcome, as speedily as possible, the obstacles which lay in the way of pig killing. His white blouse and apron in the dim, uncertain firelight, together with his strange and uncanny conduct, had deluded us into the belief that his appearance was of a supernatural character.

"This is my ghost story, and I venture to believe that the majority of those told would, if treated to a similar investigation, prove just as delusive."

And my grandfather, having ended his tale, resumed once more his pipe, and sat laughingly enjoying our somewhat amusing criticism of his story of the cook's ghost.

A KING WHO WANTED FRESH AIR.

Not long ago there was terrible excitement at the royal court of Annam. The king, Thanh Tai, who is now fourteen years old, was missing. Etiquette requires that the Annamese king shall never leave the royal grounds. He is a kingly prisoner.

But the young potentate was not hard to find. Though he was a king, he was a boy, and it is natural for a boy, when he has some money in his pocket, to want to go out and spend it.

That was exactly what the King of Annam had done. Entirely alone, he had started on a "shopping" expedition through the streets of Hue. Of course, no one knew him, because he had never shown his face in public. He was simply a boy, like any boy; and this was exactly what he wanted.

But he was treated with great respect by the shopkeepers, because he seemed to have plenty of money. Curiously enough, the thing which seemed to attract him most was a head-shearing machine, or hair clipper, and when the frightened nobles of the court discovered him at last, it with this singular implement in his possession.

He had already begun to experiment with it on the heads of several small street boys, who were proving rebellious subjects, when the courtiers approached him, prostrating themselves upon the ground, and making alarmed outcries.

The king no longer goes out shopping, but he retains his hair clipper as a souvenir of a happy day of freedom with the street boys.

THE FLAGSTAFF ON THE TOWER.

By WARREN BELL.

"Well," said Mr. Grafton, as he pushed his chair back from the breakfast table, "I think you've seen everything there is to be seen in such an out-of-the-way place. Now, Harry, are you sure you've shown your friend everything?"

Harry Grafton was my great chum, and I was spending a part of the vacation with him. On hearing his father's question, he puckered up his brow and gave his not usually overtaxed brain a little exercise.

"Let's see," he replied, "you've seen the town hall and the old powder mill, my rabbits, the bridge, and the lake. Yes, he's seen everything, father."

"But he hasn't been up the tower yet!" put in Jack Grafton, a young imp of ten summers—and other seasons—who faithfully followed his brother and myself about wherever we went.

Mr. Grafton's beautiful country house was built of stone, with a tower at one corner. This tower was very high and intersected with little windows here and there.

"No, that he hasn't!" exclaimed Harry, pleased at the idea of having something else left to show me. "If you'll let me have the keys, father, we'll go at once."

Mr. Grafton hesitated before procuring the needful keys.

"You must be very careful," he said; "and, Harry, my boy, you mustn't play any foolhardy pranks up there. Jack, I shan't allow you to go at all."

Jack looked doleful as Mr. Grafton handed over the keys to his eldest son, who promptly led the way to the tower.

With some difficulty Harry opened the massive door of the edifice, and just as we were commencing our ascent on the spiral staircase we heard a patter of small feet behind us, and, on looking round, observed that Jack, unknown to his father, had managed to get into the tower as well, by means, as he explained, of a side door which had been left open by some servant.

At first his elder brother was for sending him back, but the little chap pleaded so hard to be allowed to accompany us, that at length Harry yielded to his entreaties, and we continued our journey up the tower, Harry leading the way, myself next, and Jack last.

After a toilsome and dusty climb, we at length emerged on the roof of the tower, from which post of vantage we could see the country for many miles round.

But neither Harry nor Jack troubled themselves much about the view. Delighted at being in such an exalted position, young Jack scampered about the leaden roof in a most frisky manner, while Harry took in his surroundings with all the gusto of a sixteen-year-old schoolboy. After a time they fell to cutting their initials on the leadwork, and, this done, looked about them for a fresh source of amusement. They were not long in finding one.

In the center of the tower had been erected a tall and noble-looking flagstaff. On the morning in question no flag was flying, only the staff and its cordage being visible.

Harry, looking round for something fresh for his "idle hands to do," spied the vacant staff, and at once came to the conclusion that, as no flag was to hand, something in the shape of one should be made to float in the air in recognition of my visit to the village. So he quickly collected all the handkerchiefs and ties appertaining to the trio, knotted them together, and in a very short time had run them up to the top of the flagstaff, where they floated defiantly in the breeze.

Small Jack clapped his hands with delight, and, climbing a little way up the staff, began to lower and raise the impromptu flag with a too energetic rapidity, for, on running it swiftly up to the top, the cord got entangled in some way, with the result that the string of ties and handkerchiefs remained fixed at the top of the staff, some eighteen feet out of our reach.

"Well, you are a young idiot, Jack!" exclaimed his elder brother angrily. "See what you've done!"

The young gentleman addressed had no need to look, for he was fully aware of the magnitude of his crime.

"The cord has come off the roller," I remarked.

"Yes," said Harry. "The same thing happened a year ago last Fourth of July, and Tom Cartwright, one of the gardeners, had to climb to the top of the staff and put it right."

"It's rather a slender pole to bear a man's weight," I said.

"Yes," said Harry, "everybody thought it was a risky thing to do; but Tom's a light chap, and he managed it all right. Father gave him two dollars, I remember, for his pluck."

Harry stopped speaking, and we all three gazed at the far-away ties and handkerchiefs.

"Father will be awfully angry," said Harry; "and, by Jove! Jack, you'll get it for coming up when he told you not to."

Jack was looking exceedingly troubled at this piece of information, when a voice in our rear observed:

"Well, young gentlemen, this is a pretty piece of work!"

We turned round quickly, and perceived that a grimy head, clad in a rough tweed cap, had been poked through the trapdoor which led onto the top of the tower, and that a pair of brown eyes belonging to the same was watching us with considerable interest.

"Oh, Tom; is that you?" exclaimed Harry. "This is the

very man I was telling you about," he continued, turning to me.

Tom Cartwright, after showing us his head, next proceeded to manifest that he possessed a body and a complete set of limbs, by hoisting himself through the trap and standing upright on the roof.

"I've been mending a window," he explained, "and saw you go up the staircase, although you didn't see me."

"How are we to get it down?" asked Harry despondingly, pointing to his flag.

Tom jerked and pulled the ropes for some little time, and at length gave it as his opinion that nothing short of "climbin' would do it."

"Look here, Tom," said Harry desperately, "if you'll climb up and get those things down, I'll give you all the money I have—fifty cents."

"And I'll give you ten cents," chimed in Jack, putting a grubby little hand in his pocket and pulling out the sum in question.

"I don't want your money, Master Harry," said the gardener sturdily, "and if I did, I don't think I could earn it, as I doubt if this pole 'u'd bear me now. I'm heavier than I was a year ago, and the pole's not so tough."

"Oh, it'll bear you," said Harry. "You see Tom, I don't want father to know anything about this."

Tom smiled grimly as he proceeded to take off his coat and boots.

"I'll try it, Master Harry," he said, getting up and shaking the staff by way of testing its bearing properties. "'Never say die' is my motto, so here goes."

With these words the gardener commenced his ascent of the staff, which began to tremble violently beneath his weight. We three clustered at its foot, watching the climber's movements with hard-drawn breath and straining eyes, for it was no light task that Cartwright had set himself to accomplish. Up, up, up, he went, with the skill of a practiced climber, never pausing and never looking down. In order to find out whether he was observed, Harry ran to the parapet and looked over.

"Why, there's quite a crowd of people there!" he exclaimed, starting back, "and—and—yes, I can see father among them."

I took a hasty glance over the parapet myself, and noticed that all the people in the neighborhood were hastening out of their houses in order to get a better view of the intrepid climber. From the point where I looked over, the tower went sheer down to the ground, without a break of any kind.

"Tom has reached the top!" sang out Harry, while I was still gazing at the people below.

I hastened back to the foot of the staff, and perceived that the gardener was rapidly disengaging the line of ties and handkerchiefs from the rope. The staff was trembling violently, and so I suggested to Harry that we three should hold it by its stem, since we might, in that way, be able to steady it in a measure.

So we all seized it, and, as subsequent events proved, it was very fortunate that we did so, for just as Tom had unfastened Harry's flag and adjusted the line in its proper place, the staff gave a loud crack.

"Look out, Tom!" Harry was just shouting, when the staff broke at the bottom and fell, with its human burden, right across the side of the tower which faced the people below. I remember—indeed, shall I ever forget?—the glimpse that I got of the gardener's face as the top of the pole flashed over the parapet. He was pale as death, and seemed, as he passed through the air, already to taste the bitterness of death. It was truly an awful moment!

We three at the foot of the pole mechanically clung to it, with the result that our combined weight kept the staff from going right over the parapet. For a few seconds the catastrophe took the shape of a terrible game of seesaw, Cartwright, with the majority of the staff, hanging over the parapet, and ourselves, with little more than the stem of the pole, balancing it down on our side. Meanwhile, the gardener, with wonderful nerve and strength, clung to his frail support. First the staff went down on his side, and we went up in the air. Then, as our combined weight altered our position, Harry got one foot into the trap, with the result that the gardener was poised in the air and held there simply by the strength of Harry's leg. Cartwright grasped the situation in a moment, and, with a shout to Harry to keep the pole in that position, came down the staff hand over hand till he reached the parapet, when he slid onto the leaden roof and sank down in a dead faint.

Instantly we pulled up the staff amid a tremendous yell of relief from the people below. Two minutes later Mr. Grafton and a dozen of his neighbors were by our side, some attending to Cartwright, and some to little Jack, who had also fainted with fright.

Thus did a boyish freak almost end in a terrible tragedy.

SWISS WATCH SCHOOLS.

The famous Swiss watch schools are the most exacting industrial institutions in the world. Their methods, which are doubtless the secret of their success, are very curious and interesting.

In one of the most celebrated of these institutions in Geneva, for example, a boy must first of all be at least fourteen years of age in order to enter.

After being admitted, the student is first introduced to a wood-turning lathe, and put it work at turning tool handles. This exercise lasts for several weeks, according to the beginner's aptitude. This is followed by exercises in filing and shaping screw drivers and small tools. In this way he learns to make for himself a fairly complete set of tools.

He next undertakes to make a large wooden pattern of a watch frame, perhaps a foot in diameter, and, after learning how this frame is to be shaped, he is given a ready-cut one of brass, of the ordinary size, in which he is taught to drill holes for the wheels and screws. Throughout this instruction the master stands over the pupil, directing him with the greatest care.

The pupil is next taught to finish the frame so that it will be ready to receive the wheels. He is then instructed to make fine tools and to become expert in handling them.

This completes the instruction in the first room, and the young watchmaker next passes to the department where he is taught to fit the stem-winding parts, and to do fine cutting and filing by hand.

Later on he learns to make the more complex watches, which will strike the hour, minute, et cetera, and the other delicate mechanisms for which the Swiss are famous.

THE NEWS OF ALL NATIONS.

Tobacco Going Out of Style.

Discussing smoking among students in a chapel address, President Main, of Grinnell College, Grinnell, Iowa, declared that he expected the day to come when the use of the weed would be as obsolete as snuff taking now is.

"Time was," said the president, "when everybody, from prince to pauper, prided himself on his ability to dip snuff, but now the only place you can find snuff boxes is in a museum of antiquities, and some day our descendants may have to go to these same museums to find our pipes and other smokers' utensils."

There is no definite faculty ordinance at Grinnell against smoking, but for years one of the unwritten laws of the students has been that there shall be no use of tobacco in public.

Pet Ground Hog Leaves Home.

About four years ago H. M. Adington, living near Hilliard, Ky., captured a ground hog. He soon had it tamed like any of his other domestic pets, and running about his premises as freely as his dog or cat. He finally had it so it would obey him just like a child.

While the ground hog was small, Adington pierced holes in its ears, intending to insert silver rings in the punctures for novelty and ornament, but he never could secure the rings.

Later, for some unsolved reason, unless the ground hog started out in search of its shadow, it disappeared. This was about four years ago. Recently a farmer living near Mr. Adington's place shot and killed a ground hog, and in descriptions of it Adington quickly recognized that it was none other than his former pet.

Boy Weds Twelve-year-old Bride.

Eugene Bowman, aged twenty, has married Leona Hemphill, whose age is twelve years and six months, after courting the little maid for over two years. The bride's mother is a widow with six children and she is said to have made no objection to the wedding. All parties are residents of Independence, La.

Bow and Arrows Fatal Weapon.

A bow and arrows constitute a deadly weapon. For driving two surveyors off his reservation farm with a shower of glass-tipped arrows, Willie Anton, an aged Pima, was convicted in the Federal court for the district of Arizona of assault with a deadly weapon and given a jail sentence of sixty days. Anton had a lawyer who interposed the defense that a bow and arrows are not a deadly weapon.

A Pleasant Railroad Story.

A grudge turned to gratitude is the unusual experience of John Hansen, a railroad conductor of Atchison, Kan. Years ago when he was a freight conductor he whipped a boy for hopping his train. The boy threatened to kill him, and for several years shouted threats at him when the train passed by.

Finally Hansen was promoted to a passenger train, and did not see the boy, as he passed through the town at night. Not long ago the conductor was in the lobby of a hotel at the terminal of his run when a powerfully framed man approached him and asked:

"Are you John Hansen?"

The conductor admitted it, and the stranger continued: "Do you think you could whip me?"

Hansen admitted it was unlikely, as the stranger was a near giant.

"Well," continued the stranger, "I am the fellow you whipped once for hopping trains, and I probably owe my sound legs, arms, and life to you. Shake hands."

Girl's Do You Get This?

Declaring they were "watchfully waiting" for the right girl, twenty-two per cent of Princeton University's seniors declared they had never been kissed. A fellow "never wanted to," while others said they objected to kissing for "hygienic reasons."

Oregon Town Has a Flesh-eating Horse.

In Seaside, Orc., they have what is often spoken of as the "flesh-eating" horse. This animal actually eats the flesh of raw clams, oysters, mussels, and some meats. He is especially fond of clams, and will eat them raw in preference to hay or grain; in fact, he will eat almost anything that is eaten by man or horse.

"Billie Bitters," as he is called, is a horse of more than ordinary intelligence. He will point at a crab in a crab hole as a pointer points at a bird. He will follow his master from one digging ground to another, and should he be spoken harshly to, he will sulk like a scolded child, and the only way that he can be persuaded to follow his master again is to feed him some more clams.

Billie understands nearly everything that Mr. Scott says to him. Should he say: "Billie, it's time to go home," the horse will immediately turn the wagon around and start on the return trip for home.

Billie is a bunch-grass seven-year-old, and a native of eastern Oregon. He was brought to the beach by W. B. Scott, of Seaside, when but three years old and broken into the clam business. Billie has followed this line of work ever since.

Belle of the Ranch is Won by Movie Manager.

When Leonard B. Gratz arrived at the Laflin Beaumer ranch in Vici, Okla., three years ago in charge of a moving-picture troupe, he found that not one of the movie actresses was capable of making one of those mad dashes on horseback that causes thrills in Western dramas.

He was about to give up hope, when he observed a pretty girl, with her hair streaming back, riding a galloping horse down the roadway. Gratz learned that the fair rider was Nellie Beumer, the ranch owner's daughter. That same afternoon she successfully portrayed the rôle of the heroine before the movie camera, and Gratz was more than pleased.

When the picture players left the ranch, they observed a strong friendship between Miss Beumer and Gratz. This

friendship was kept alive by correspondence, which finally led in the direction Gratz desired.

As a result they were married in a Congregational church in Chicago. Gratz is now president of a movie ticket company. The couple will spend their honeymoon at the Panama Exposition.

Interesting New Invention.

A machine with which he says any child can cut its own hair has been perfected by Joseph J. McDonough, of Rochester, Pa. The invention consists of an ordinary comb so constructed that a safety-razor blade is held firmly against each side, at any desired distance from the edge of the comb. By a system of springs these blades can be regulated so as to make the cut long or short. According to the inventor, a man can cut his hair while riding on a fast-moving train, an automobile, or even an aeroplane, without danger of cutting himself or spoiling the job.

Rich Youth is Killed by Saw.

John B. Tucker, twenty-three years old, fell against a circular saw in a mill near Haskell, Okla., and was killed. Tucker's home was in Meadville, Pa., and he had inherited considerable property. He was working at the sawmill just because he liked the excitement, and was not on the pay roll.

Finds a Strange Gold Coin.

C. J. Poole, of Troy, N. C., reports having found a strange gold coin while plowing near Harrisville. He describes it as follows:

It is about the size of our silver half dollar; a little larger on the face, but not quite so thick. Obverse—female head and neck long, flowing curly hair, decorated with arrowheads; very prominent face, nose and mouth. Legend—10 Annes, V. D. G. Port, Et. Afg. Rex date 1750. A large capital "R" on bottom of neck and extending almost into the date figures. Reverse—crown coat of arms.

The coin is not quite round, but is evidently in its original shape. It weighs nearly half an ounce. This coin was probably lying in the ground during the Revolutionary War, but where it came from, who lost it or hid it, no one here knows. The coin is in fine condition.

Digs Out Mastodon's Leg.

Ott Workman, while digging fence-post holes on his river bottom, near Sholes, Ind., unearthed a leg bone of a mastodon. It is in a good state of preservation.

Newspaper Recalls His Mind.

J. Foster Jenkins, a wealthy real-estate operator of Yonkers, N. Y., who disappeared April 7th, has been found in Cincinnati, Ohio, whither he wandered while a victim of amnesia. Mrs. Jenkins received from him a letter telling of his recovery. His picture, printed in a newspaper, restored his memory.

Canoe Owner Solves Problem.

The little power devices which have in recent years been placed on the market for use on rowboats by placing the device over the stern have proven very popular, but the owner of the canoe has been prevented from using it on account of the shape of the stern of the latter, which leaves no means of securing the engine and its necessary parts.

This has now been accomplished by an ingenious canoe owner by building a well in the canoe by two partitions extending across the boat, into which the engine is lowered after a hole has been cut through the bottom to accommodate the propeller shaft and blades. This arrangement has been found to be entirely satisfactory in practice.

Most Surprising Discovery.

The following was found on the examination papers of eleven-year-old Jimmy Henderson of the public school in Miami, Okla. It was entirely unintentional, being a list of names of the countries at war, which the pupils were required to write down:

Germany.
Russia.
Austria.
Belgium.
France.
England.
Servia.
Turkey.

What Compound Interest Does.

One dollar at five per cent compounded interest for one thousand years would amount to 121 quintillion, 69 quatrillion, 620 trillion, 917 billion, 985 million, 83 thousand, 389 dollars ($121,069,620,917,985,083,389). This is the result obtained by Edwin Soule, a freshman in the Newport High School in Marysville, Pa.

Assistant Principal G. W. Barnitz, of the school, wagered young Soule that he could not solve the problem. Soule worked until midnight, consuming two tablets and four pencils. He received his dollar.

Barefoot "Baron" of Kentucky Dies.

Rankin Clemmons, who died last week at the residence of D. B. Cawby, a tenant on one of his farms, near South Elkhorn, Ky., where he had made his home for nearly a year, was the largest individual holder of lands in the blue-grass region of Kentucky, probably the wealthiest citizen of Lexington County, and a man of many eccentricities.

Mr. Clemmons owned between 8,000 and 9,000 acres of land in Mercer, Jessamine, Woodford, and Fayette Counties, of which about 1,100 acres are in the latter.

All of Mr. Clemmons' lands are of high quality, none being valued at less than $100 per acre, while much of it is estimated to be worth from $125 to $150 an acre. In addition, Mr. Clemmons is understood to have held considerable personalty, including cash, pending deals for more land, and his estate is estimated at nearly $1,500,000.

A notable feature of Mr. Clemmons' acquisition of great wealth was the fact that he had never engaged in speculation or dabbled in city property, or stocks and bonds, but had amassed his wealth from the direct products of the soil.

His whole life was given to the accumulation of his fortune, his entire being seeming to be centered to that end. He had apparently no other interests, few attachments, no recreations, and many eccentricities, and by the latter he was most generally known in this county.

He had up to the end of his life gone barefooted in the summertime, except when he came to town; had

never bought a newspaper or book; had never ridden in an automobile or upon an electric car, used a telephone, or, as far as is known, sent a telegraph message.

He was, however, a shrewd and alert observer, and kept well informed on current events through association with others and perusal of newspapers which happened to come into his hands without cost, and was not averse to utilizing modern farming implements in his agricultural operations. However, his life business was that of agricultural financier rather than farmer, he personally working little of his vast domain of blue-grass land.

The farming upon his property was done almost entirely by tenants, though he himself had daily done hard manual labor throughout his long life. Only last fall, when eighty-nine years old, he was cutting briers upon his place just before he became confined with the illness which caused his death.

A peculiarity was that he would never raise tobacco, not even on the shares with his tenants, as is the almost universal custom in the burley belt. If a man wanted to raise tobacco upon his land, Mr. Clemmons would rent him the ground at forty dollars an acre.

"I don't know anything about raising tobacco," he would say, "but if you want to raise it upon my land you can go on and do so, and give me your note at forty dollars an acre per annum, which people say tobacco land is worth, and pay it when you sell the crop."

He never wore a watch in his life, although he at one time had two clocks in the house, one which was an ancient brass timepiece, probably an heirloom, but both of these were stolen many years ago and were never replaced. The sun was his timekeeper, he going to work by its rising and considering it time to quit when it had set. He never used a vehicle for travel, but came to town on horseback, he having made his last visit here several weeks ago by that method.

Only one time in all his ninety years, as far as there is any record, did Mr. Clemmons "blow himself" in an extravagant outlay of money. This was when he got married, some sixty years ago! On that occasion he not only bought himself a nice horse and new buggy, but paid fifty dollars for a set of harness, as he himself was wont to relate. But when the wedding festivities were over, the buggy was placed in the barn, never to come out again. Its leather decayed, and fell apart, its wheels rusted in idleness, and the whole vehicle, with the lapse of time, fell to pieces.

Also Mr. Clemmons, in honor of one great event of his life, purchased extravagantly of wedding garments. Complete as any dandy could have it, a broadcloth suit, a pair of fine, soft-leather boots, and even a plug hat, which was in the fashion of that day, were bought to adorn the bridegroom, but they were never worn but once.

After the marriage Mr. Clemmons said he must now go to work, and the stovepipe hat, the soft-leather boots, and the broadcloth suit were hung upon nails in the attic, and there remained until a few years ago, when a hard-up thief, who took the clocks likewise, carried off the wedding raiment.

Mr. Clemmons' wife, who had been Miss Virginia Brock, of near Keene, in Jessamine County, died about thirteen years ago. Two of his three children had met violent deaths, but he is survived by one child, Mrs. John Larkin, wife of a farmer near South Elkhorn.

Mr. Clemmons would have been ninety years old next fall, and with the exception of his nearly fatal injuries when he was attacked by robbers in 1891, and on several occasions when he met with accidents in his work, he had never been critically ill in his life until about a year ago.

Drives Horse 62,868 Miles.

Adam Puerkle, carrier on R. F. D. Route 2, out of Stuttgart, Ark., has a horse that he began driving on the route March 9, 1903, and since that date he has had this horse in constant use, a portion of the time making daily trips and the rest of the time making three trips a week.

He has made a total mileage of 62,868 in the mail service with this horse, and is still using him three trips per week, with a fair prospect of several years' more service. This horse is fifteen years old.

Cow Chews Tobacco and Dies.

When William Rogers, a farmer west of Bethany, Mo., returned home from town late the other night, in the rush of putting away his team and doing sundry chores he forgot some chewing tobacco which he had purchased, and left the package containing over two pounds on the wagon seat.

Rogers thought of his tobacco in the night, but decided that it would be safe till morning.

When he appeared in the barnyard next morning, he was surprised to see one of his best milch cows standing by the wagon, diligently chewing. An investigation showed that she had devoured nearly all of the tobacco. The cow showed symptoms of illness immediately, and a veterinarian was summoned, but the animal died the next day.

His Heart Sewn Up, Patient Recovers.

A remarkable operation, involving the sewing up of a wound in a man's heart, was performed successfully recently at the Beth Israel Hospital, Monroe and Jefferson Streets, New York City. The injured man, Israel Ziff, of 238 East 105th Street, is well on the way to recovery, and probably will be out of the hospital in a few days.

Ziff operates a pushcart in Monroe Street, near the hospital, selling slices of coconut to passers-by. He is in the habit of slicing the coconut himself with a knife, more than a foot long, whose wide blade tapers down to a sharp point.

Several months ago Ziff cut himself badly while cutting up his wares, and his wife and children begged him to give up his occupation and find some other method of earning a living. He tried to do it, but he could find nothing else. His pushcart was well known in the neighborhood, and his business was good; so he was compelled to keep at it.

Business was brisk one night, and the coconuts were going fast. Ziff had to cut up new ones from time to time, and every few minutes found him bending over with his knife at work. Presently the thing he had always feared happened; his knife slipped and cut through the left breast, a deep wound.

Ziff knew he was badly hurt. So he straightened up, laid down his knife, and started for the Beth Israel Hospital, about a block and a half away. How he got there continues to be a mystery to the surgeons, but he did get there. He walked into the office in Jefferson Street,

near Cherry Street, looking as if nothing much was the matter.

Doctor George Levy, who received him, saw that his injuries were serious, and notified Doctor Alfred A. Schwartz, the house surgeon. Doctor Schwartz's examination disclosed a wound at least an inch and a half long at the outer surface and going far down in.

Doctor Schwartz called up Doctor Charles Goodman, of 969 Madison Avenue, the attending surgeon, and told him that he was badly needed at once. Doctor Simon D. Ehrlich, the hospital's anæsthetist, also was notified, and Ziff was carried to the operating room. Here Doctor Schwartz packed the wound with gauze and stopped the flow of blood, and everything was made ready to start work when Doctor Goodman arrived.

The operating surgeon arrived in record time, and then began some quick work. The flow of blood had to be stopped in the first place, and the patient anæsthetized for the operation. But if the chest were cut open to check the hemorrhage, the lungs would have collapsed from the air pressure on the outside, so air had to be pumped in until the inflation was sufficient to resist the pressure from without.

This process was combined with the application of the anæsthetic by the method known as intertracheal anæsthesia. By means of an apparatus operated by electricity, ether was mixed in a jar with air in the proportion considered advisable, and the resultant mixture forced through a tube far down into the patient's throat. By this means anæsthesia was produced and the air within the lungs was raised to double the normal pressure.

With the patient anæsthetized and the lungs secured against danger of collapse, Doctor Goodman cut away three ribs and a piece of the breastbone. He found the chest full of blood, and this had to be drawn off before anything more could be done. When the blood was cleared away, Doctor Goodman found that the knife had made a big cut in the pericardium and that the point had gone down nearly three-eighths of an inch into the heart.

The most ticklish part of the operation followed—sewing up the heart while it was palpitating. One stitch was sufficient to close the wound in the heart itself, three more did the work with the pericardium. Doctor Goodman sewed the skin together over the wound, and Ziff was put away to recover. He came out of the operation as rapidly as could have been expected, and except that the protection of the ribs over the heart will be missing, he is likely to be in no way the worse for his experience.

Had the point of the knife gone a millimeter or so farther in, Ziff never would have lived to get to the hospital, as the consequent hemorrhage would have been almost instantly fatal. The hospital authorities at first supposed from the nature and depth of the wound that he had been stabbed in a fight, and it was not until a day or two ago, that Ziff recovered sufficiently to tell them how he had been injured.

"The Lady of the Lighthouse."

Beautiful Mrs. Helen S. Woodruff, of New York, who lived in darkness for two years, is now working hard for the cause of the blind. In her own time of trial she patiently learned to "see through her fingers" and wrote the story, "The Lady of the Lighthouse," which has made her famous.

When her sight was restored by a marvelous operation, she was so grateful that she has devoted all her time and energy for the benefit of the New York Association of the Blind, which has established the original "Lighthouse" in New York.

Mrs. Woodruff is the first society woman who has acted for the "movies," and she only consented to do this in the dramatization of her story because it would aid the cause of the blind. The photo play which illustrates her talks on the blind is to be shown all over the country, for charity.

Humorous Exploits of Old-time Editor.

For a short time immediately preceding the Civil War, Henry Faxon, who, according to William Lightfoot Vischer, was the "father of American newspaper humor," was a special writer on the Louisville *Journal*. Afterward he went from Louisville to Columbia, Tenn., and was the editor there, for perhaps a year or so, of a weekly newspaper; but he really belonged to Buffalo, N. Y.

Henry Faxon, familiarly called Hank, was a man of innumerable accomplishments. He could speak many tongues. He was an excellent electrician, a brilliant musician, had a rich singing voice, and frequently delighted his company with songs that he sang to his own accompaniment on the piano. He was a fine draftsman and cartoonist, and often made pictures with his pencil that were full of fun.

In newspaper work he wrote with a humor that has never been excelled, and in a broad, exaggerated style, which was not widely appreciated in his day. Indeed, he was the originator of that class of newspaper humor, and a brilliant poet withal.

It was Faxon who caused Blondin to achieve the first great performance in rope walking that gave that artist a world-wide fame in—and on—his particular line. Faxon induced Blondin to walk across Niagara River at the falls the first time the rope walker attempted that seemingly perilous feat, which he performed so many times afterward.

Faxon was the editor of a little newspaper at Buffalo at the time under consideration—the summer of 1859. A circus had stranded in Buffalo, and with it was this Frenchman, Emile Gravelot Blondin, who came to this country in 1855. He was part owner of the broken circus. Faxon took a fancy to Blondin, or, at any rate, sympathized with him in his distress, and, after serious discussion of the proposed thrilling feat, Faxon agreed to supply the paraphernalia, at the cost of several hundred dollars, and Blondin declared he was ready to perform it, which he did for the first time on June 30, 1859, later doing that same act with a man strapped on his back, and again with a wheelbarrow, stove, and cooking utensils, with which he cooked a meal when halfway over the rope.

The thing was widely advertised; great excursions went to see it. Blondin's fame and fortune were made.

Faxon was happiest when doing something to relieve the distress of another, and he was moreover greatly given to practical joking. These two characteristics in him produced a hoax that became famous at the time.

A little south of Buffalo is a beautiful sheet of water called Silver Lake, and it had some mysteries about it. In its center was a deep place that soundings could not measure. Its waters were cold as ice, and there were no fish or other living creatures in it. On its banks a man

had built a fine hotel, hoping to make it an attractive resort, but guests were few and tribulation plenty. Bankruptcy threatened, and the landlord told his troubles to Faxon, who had run down there for a few days' rest.

Faxon fixed up a plan to fill the hotel. Faxon went back to Buffalo and secured the services of another genius—a mechanical genius—a young German, whose only wealth was his ingenuity and a little tinsmithery. Faxon told him what he wanted. The German jumped at the idea.

He constructed a great tin or zinc monster like a sea serpent. It had an immense and fearful red mouth, from which darted a forked tongue, and its huge jaws worked like an alligator's.

This thing was so anchored near the deepest place in the lake and was so arranged with pulleys and tiller ropes, or something of that nature, that being worked from a secret subcellar in the hotel, it could be made to dart its head and hideous length up out of the lake and lash the water with its tail until it would send big ripples to the shores.

Its movements were so rapid and eccentric that the artificialty of the thing could not be detected, and it had no regular hours for appearance, but was a sort of a go-as-you-please serpent.

Faxon wrote blazing columns in his newspapers about it. The newspapers all over the country had many lengths of that snake in them, in word paintings and other pictures. The hotel became crowded, and the landlord put up sheds and tents on his premises and filled them with guests, and he coined money, so to speak.

The monstrous serpent was a wonder and a mystery for a great many more than seven days, but at last, in a specially strenuous flop one day, the apparatus broke and that old tin serpent turned its white belly up to the sun, and the Silver Lake snake business exploded.

Meantime, the landlord had become as rich as a king and could have afforded to give the hotel away, but he used it for many years as a country seat, and looked complacently at his fortune as a monument to the wit of Hank Faxon and the credulity of mankind.

How to Live Long, Told by Eleven Men.

What is the secret of long life? Probably there is no question that has so many answers, nor such a variety of answers. But it's still the big question. The other day eleven recipes for long lives were given at a dinner at Amarillo, Texas, held in honor of the Reverend James Cunningham, celebrating his ninetieth birthday. The guests were veterans of the Confederacy, whose ages ranged from seventy-five to eighty-one, and each told briefly of the manner of living that had enabled him to reach old age and retain good health and vigor.

In substance, the recipes provide for hard work, fresh air, outdoor living, the avoidance of trouble and worry, good humor, plenty of sleep, temperance, and the avoidance of tobacco.

"For fifty years my habits have been regular," said Doctor Cunningham. "Before that time I was careless. Then I went outdoors and engaged in farm work. The change was marvelous, and I have exceeded the record for longevity that has appeared in other generations of the family."

Captain W. W. Kidd has been a carpenter thirty-five years, and naturally has spent much of his time out-of-doors. Regular habits and care of his health enabled him to pass the eighty mark. "My father lived to be ninety-eight," he said, "and one of my grandmothers to be ninety-six. While long life runs in the family, I am sure that fresh air and plenty of exercise will make a man live a long time."

J. L. Caldwell said that for fifty years he had not lived in a plastered house, and that he attributes to that fact much responsibility for his excellent health and long life. "Before I abandoned the plastered house," he said, "I was in poor health, and after it I had no physical complaints worth mentioning. I have had exercise sufficient to keep up circulation."

"I have always avoided worry and courted good humor," said J. G. Hudson.

"I attribute my long life to my service in the army as a soldier," said A. B. Kinnebrew. "Before entering the army I was sickly and weak. The camp life and marches and excitement recuperated me, and thereafter I enjoyed good health by being careful of my habits and eating."

"I have lived temperately, eaten coarse victuals, and slept well, and these things have much to do with a man's health," said J. H. Rockwell. "There is something, too, in ancestry. My father lacked but four months reaching the century mark; another ancestor lived to the age of one hundred and seven. I have traced my ancestry back three hundred years, and find that a majority of them have lived beyond the age of eighty."

"At the age of fourteen, when I left home," said W. J. Patton, "I made a vow to myself never to use intoxicants or gamble. I have worked out-of-doors most of the time since the war, and much of the time have slept in the open. I have always taken plenty of exercise."

J. M. White said he had never used tobacco and had always been temperate, and he believed those two facts were largely responsible for his reaching a ripe old age.

Richard Wren's health was poor before he entered the army, but the change made him robust and strong, and he has enjoyed good health to this day.

D. L. Britain said hard work and regular and temperate habits had caused him to grow into a stout and happy old age.

"I have never had any trouble with my neighbors, and that means a lot in the matter of health," said Doctor W. A. Lockett.

"Early to bed and early to rise has been my motto," said J. H. Sowder. "Added to that I have been temperate, regular in my habits, and avoided things that might injure my health."

Brothers as Like as Two Peas.

Leslie and Hallie Woodcock are brothers, who have the entire marine corps at League Island, near Philadelphia. They are as remarkable "twins" as ever made any one gasp, and, after eight months, their officers and fellow marines of Company 17 cannot tell them apart.

Leslie and Hallie are seventeen years and twenty years old and enlisted from their home in South Carolina. At enlistment they were promised that they would never be placed in separate companies. Not long ago a disgusted captain was for assigning them to different companies. They smiled and told him of their enlistment agreement.

In reading the list of those detailed for various police duties in the mornings, the company officers merely mention the name of Woodcock. They realize that one blond

young twin will report for duty. Further investigation is useless.

"I've done a pile of stuff for you, old boy," said Hallie to his brother. "Remember the time——"

"I know you stole my girl about a month ago," replied Leslie. "Thought I was solid. But she never knew the difference."

"Maybe we haven't got some girls up in town buffaloed," grinned Hallie. "When we get paid we toss a coin to see who is to spend his money first. The one that wins goes uptown and sees the crowd. Our salaries aren't fat and they don't last forever, but when the first one of us begins to run low, the other one steps into his shoes, and then our citizen friends think that there is only one of us and that one is there with considerable dough."

Each of the boys holds in his voice the smooth drawl of the South. One can't tell the difference between the tones. There is something uncanny in the similarity of the two smiles. Their lips go back in exactly the same fashion and four eyes twinkle alike. They smile often, too, for to them the resemblance is life's one grand joke. Each weighs 149 pounds; wears an eight shoe, a 14¾ collar, and the same size hat.

One or two of the men have discovered that one of the twins has a small piece chipped from one of his front teeth.

"That would be a hot one," observed an old sergeant: "Who goes there—Woodcock? Halt and uncover tooth."

Farmer Finds Hornets' Nest.

C. E. Demurr, a farmer living near the Kansas-Oklahoma line, found a hornets' nest on the Chickaskia River, and believing it empty, took it home for an ornament in his room.

Demurr thought nothing more of it until the next day, when he heard a buzzing sound. The hornets, which had been awakened from their stupor by the fire, left the nest and made things lively about the Demurr home for the next few hours. All efforts to dislodge the "bald heads" were unavailing until the room doors were closed and the fire permitted to burn out. The hornets became benumbed with the cold and were easily killed.

A Smart Youngster.

Two women whose husbands are members of the faculty of Oberlin College went to call on the new professor's wife. They were shown into a room where the small daughter of the house was playing. While awaiting the appearance of their hostess, one of the ladies remarked to her friend, at the same time nodding toward the little girl. "Not very p-r-e-t-t-y, is she?" spelling the word so that the child should not understand.

Instantly, before there was time for the friend to reply, came the answer from the little girl: "No, not very p-r-e-t-t-y, but awfully s-m-a-r-t."

The Original Rattlesnake Flag.

Pennsylvania's State museum, at Harrisburg, has just received one of the most precious of the historic relics housed there. It is the original rattlesnake flag of the Revolutionary War, the oldest banner representing what is now the United States.

The flag was donated by the heirs of Samuel Craig, of Westmoreland County, who died six years ago. One of the forbears of the Craigs carried it in the early days of the Revolution.

Edmund S. Craig, of New Alexandria, and P. M. Hill, of Greensburg, two of the donors, took the flag to the museum. Jesse E. B. Cunningham, ex-deputy attorney general and a former Westmoreland County man, accompanied the pair and presented the relic to Thomas Lynch Montgomery, State librarian and curator of the museum. The flag is red, with the coiled rattlesnake and the "Don't Tread on Me" warning in the center.

The Weekly 101, Most Unique Paper.

Robert R. Fitzgerald, of Lawrenceburg, Ind., is the editor of the most unique newspaper in the world—*The Weekly 101*. It is printed in lead pencil throughout, though the editions run from eight to twenty pages of standard newspaper size. The advertisements, illustrations, comic section—everything about the paper is hand-lettered by the editor, who prefers to hide himself behind the pseudonym of "Mooney Mingles."

Fitzgerald is twenty years old, and started his paper more than a year ago. Two editions are turned out weekly, and, thus far, more than 170 editions have been printed. The regular editions are penciled on white print paper, but the baseball extra is generally done on paper of a better quality and known as the "green sheet." In this supplement the baseball events of the week are briefly and ably reported.

A special edition was recently turned out to become a part of the Indiana exhibit at the Panama-Pacific Exposition. Another special number was sent to President Wilson, who congratulated the editor upon the patience and ingenuity necessary to produce such a newspaper.

The Weekly 101 is prepared during the editor's spare hours, and these are limited, because Fitzgerald works ten hours a day in a local factory to support his mother and a family of five.

The ambitious young man is anxious to own a real newspaper plant, because, as he complains, the press he now uses frequently breaks down through an attack of writer's cramp.

Those who have received sample pages of the pencil editor's work say that the young man seems to be competent to take his place among the live editors of to-day. Lawrenceburg is already proud of his remarkable and unique weekly, but the thriving little city will probably be doubly proud when the young editor launches forth into the regular channels of newspaper work.

The following paragraph is from one of the sample sheets submitted by our correspondent:

"*The 101 Weekly* newspaper will be just one year old next week. Mooney Mingles, the little editor, has planned to put out a big special edition on that day. During this whole year Mooney has not, like hundreds—yes, like thousands—of other boys, wasted his time, but during all of his spare moments has published just 160 of these copies, all printed by hand. The young editor has sent copies of this penciled newspaper to the exposition at San Francisco, Cal., to Chicago, New York, Indianapolis, Kansas City, Detroit, London, England, and many other large cities, and figures that it has been seen by 10,000,000 people."

The Nick Carter Stories

ISSUED EVERY SATURDAY — BEAUTIFUL COLORED COVERS

When it comes to detective stories worth while, the **Nick Carter Stories** contain the only ones that should be considered. They are not overdrawn tales of bloodshed. They rather show the working of one of the finest minds ever conceived by a writer. The name of Nick Carter is familiar all over the world, for the stories of his adventures may be read in twenty languages. No other stories have withstood the severe test of time so well as those contained in the **Nick Carter Stories.** It proves conclusively that they are the best. We give herewith a list of some of the back numbers in print. You can have your news dealer order them, or they will be sent direct by the publishers to any address upon receipt of the price in money or postage stamps.

704—Written in Red.
707—Rogues of the Air.
709—The Bolt from the Blue.
710—The Stockbridge Affair.
711—A Secret from the Past.
712—Playing the Last Hand.
713—A Slick Article.
714—The Taxicab Riddle.
717—The Master Rogue's Alibi.
719—The Dead Letter.
720—The Allerton Millions.
728—The Mummy's Head.
729—The Statue Clue.
730—The Torn Card.
731—Under Desperation's Spur.
732—The Connecting Link.
733—The Abduction Syndicate.
736—The Toils of a Siren.
738—A Plot Within a Plot.
739—The Dead Accomplice.
741—The Green Scarab.
746—The Secret Entrance.
747—The Cavern Mystery.
748—The Disappearing Fortune.
749—A Voice from the Past.
752—The Spider's Web.
753—The Man With a Crutch.
754—The Rajah's Regalia.
755—Saved from Death.
756—The Man Inside.
757—Out for Vengeance.
758—The Poisons of Exill.
759—The Antique Vial.
760—The House of Slumber.
761—A Double Identity.
762—"The Mocker's" Stratagem.
763—The Man that Came Back.
764—The Tracks in the Snow.
765—The Babbington Case.
766—The Masters of Millions.
767—The Blue Stain.
768—The Lost Clew.
770—The Turn of a Card.
771—A Message in the Dust.
772—A Royal Flush.
774—The Great Buddha Beryl.
775—The Vanishing Heiress.
776—The Unfinished Letter.
777—A Difficult Trail.
782—A Woman's Stratagem.
783—The Cliff Castle Affair.
784—A Prisoner of the Tomb.
785—A Resourceful Foe.
789—The Great Hotel Tragedies.
795—Zanoni, the Transfigured.
796—The Lure of Gold.
797—The Man With a Chest.
798—A Shadowed Life.
799—The Secret Agent.
800—A Plot for a Crown.
801—The Red Button.
802—Up Against It.
803—The Gold Certificate.
804—Jack Wise's Hurry Call.
805—Nick Carter's Ocean Chase.
807—Nick Carter's Advertisement.
808—The Kregoff Necklace.
811—Nick Carter and the Nihilists.
812—Nick Carter and the Convict Gang.
813—Nick Carter and the Guilty Governor.
814—The Triangled Coin.
815—Ninety-nine—and One.
816—Coin Number 77.

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1—The Man from Nowhere.
2—The Face at the Window.
3—A Fight for a Million.
4—Nick Carter's Land Office.
5—Nick Carter and the Professor.
6—Nick Carter as a Mill Hand.
7—A Single Clew.
8—The Emerald Snake.
9—The Currie Outfit.
10—Nick Carter and the Kidnaped Heiress.
11—Nick Carter Strikes Oil.
12—Nick Carter's Hunt for a Treasure.
13—A Mystery of the Highway.
14—The Silent Passenger.
15—Jack Dreen's Secret.
16—Nick Carter's Pipe Line Case.
17—Nick Carter and the Gold Thieves.
18—Nick Carter's Auto Chase.
19—The Corrigan Inheritance.
20—The Keen Eye of Denton.
21—The Spider's Parlor.
22—Nick Carter's Quick Guess.
23—Nick Carter and the Murderess.
24—Nick Carter and the Pay Car.
25—The Stolen Antique.
26—The Crook League.
27—An English Cracksman.
28—Nick Carter's Still Hunt.
29—Nick Carter's Electric Shock.
30—Nick Carter and the Stolen Duchess.
31—The Purple Spot.
32—The Stolen Groom.
33—The Inverted Cross.
34—Nick Carter and Keno McCall.
35—Nick Carter's Death Trap.
36—Nick Carter's Siamese Puzzle.
37—The Man Outside.
38—The Death Chamber.
39—The Wind and the Wire.
40—Nick Carter's Three Cornered Chase.
41—Dazaar, the Arch-Fiend.
42—The Queen of the Seven.
43—Crossed Wires.
44—A Crimson Clew.
45—The Third Man.
46—The Sign of the Dagger.
47—The Devil Worshipers.
48—The Cross of Daggers.
49—At Risk of Life.
50—The Deeper Game.
51—The Code Message.
52—The Last of the Seven.
53—Ten-Ichi, the Wonderful.
54—The Secret Order of Associated Crooks.
55—The Golden Hair Clew.
56—Back From the Dead.
57—Through Dark Ways.
58—When Aces Were Trumps.
59—The Gambler's Last Hand.
60—The Murder at Linden Fells.
61—A Game for Millions.
62—Under Cover.
63—The Last Call.
64—Mercedes Danton's Double.
65—The Millionaire's Nemesis.
66—A Princess of the Underworld.
67—The Crook's Blind.
68—The Fatal Hour.
69—Blood Money.
70—A Queen of Her Kind.
71—Isabel Benton's Trump Card.
72—A Princess of Hades.
73—A Prince of Plotters.
74—The Crook's Double.
75—For Life and Honor.
76—A Compact With Dazaar.
77—In the Shadow of Dazaar.
78—The Crime of a Money King.
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